

Remarks Christian Social Conference

## **A Modern Social Ministry for Christians: the Moral Sense, Common Grace and the Common Future of Humanity**

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I want to speak to you today about the special Christian custodial vocation of securing the realm of common grace.

This is not to admit that other religions are exempt from such stewardship responsibility. They are not as I will briefly indicate. In fact, my argument is that all human persons should recognize, activate, develop, and deploy their Moral Sense in order that the realm of common grace can thrive. But I believe that intentional Christians through their faith assume a special quality of responsibility in the way in which they live out their numbered days.

Our challenge both for individuals and collectively, as always, is to live well in this world of time and space as we make history.

Today we face special challenges. The post-World War II effort to shore up and sustain the realm of common grace is slipping away from us. That effort has relied on the Rule of Law, both internationally through the United Nations and within nation states under Human Rights jurisprudence, on collective security, and on economic development for all peoples to promote human felicity and provide every one with life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, to quote from my country's Declaration of Independence.

Today, however, the Rule of Law and international institutions are being marginalized. In Asia the Rule of Law is being rejected by Han Chauvinism and military aggression in the South China Sea, which should be more appropriately called the Southeast Asia Sea as never in human history have the Chinese had any ownership of those waters and their tiny islands and sand bars. Will the Chinese honor the recent ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration sitting here in Den Haag?

In Europe the EU is under attack from parochialisms, including Russian chauvinism.

In the Middle East especially but also around the world a perverse understanding of Islam brings death to innocents by encouraging individuals most wrongfully to assume God's prerogative to judge the quick and the dead. Such beliefs are a cancer metastasizing across God's realm of common grace.

In my country the United States, leadership to sustain a just order of things has evaporated under the temptations promoted by a totalizing psycho-social selfishness among Republicans and Democrats alike which self-absorption destroys conviction and eviscerates courage.

Under these circumstances, then, what are we to do?

When the realm of common grace in my country was under assault from a determined effort to extend chattel slavery, then politician Abraham Lincoln stated: *If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could then better judge what to do, and how to do it.*

So, where indeed are we and where is our world tending?

Abraham Kuyper in his first Stone Lecture (delivered at Princeton in 1898) very accurately pointed to where we are today. He predicted that our world, day by day, inch by inch, and ounce by ounce, was more and more coming under the sway of what he called "Modernism".

He concluded that "Modernism, which denies and abolishes every difference, cannot rest until it has made woman man and man woman, ..."

In my country our culture war between Modernism and Christianity has reached the point of demanding transgender bathrooms for five year old children to shield them from contextual gender realities. In the United States gender has become a matter of choice and free will, with physical reconstruction to follow the preferred direction of the mind. The US military has recently embraced those who pick their gender at will.

Kuyper further observed about the fruits of Modernism that "Money, pleasure, and social power, these alone are the objects of pursuit; and people are constantly growing less fastidious regarding the means employed to secure them. The voice of conscience becomes less and less audible."

He could well be speaking of the two candidates running to be my president. Or he could be speaking of Wall Street before 2008 or Volkswagen or Takata or any of our other great corporate scandals.

I want to argue that we cannot have the totalizing psycho-cultural dominion of Modernism and still enjoy living in the realm of Common Grace. Modernism must conform to the needs of Common Grace and so the special responsibility of Christians is now and henceforth to guide that accommodation, to bend Modernism towards grace.

My argument is as follows: 1) Common Grace has placed within each of us a Moral Sense; 2) modern science has confirmed our possession of a Moral Sense; 3) Modernism rejects the Moral Sense to put itself at odds with Common Grace; so 4) we need to build up the Moral Sense to contain the excesses of Modernism.

## 1. The realm of Common Grace

I limit my argument to the realm of Common Grace, a realm which Christians I believe share will all faiths. I feel no competence to speak of Special Grace, which I admit is the highest calling of a Christian as it provides salvation for eternity thanks to our personal faith in God's grace and to the quality of our vocations here on earth.

In his first Stone Lecture, Kuyper asserted that Calvinism honored the world as a Divine creation. This, he said, brings to the front both a particular grace which works salvation and a Common Grace "by which God, maintaining the life of the world, relaxes the curse which rests upon it, arrests its process of corruption, and thus allows untrammelled development of our life in which to glorify himself as Creator".

In the space of Common Grace, Kuyper argued further, trade and commerce realize their strength in liberty; art and science are set free from every ecclesiastical bond and restored to their own independence; and humanity understands the subjection to our kind of all nature with its hidden forces and treasures as a duty placed upon nature by God. Kuyper concluded that "Henceforth the curse should no longer rest upon the world itself but upon that which is sinful in it." Thus, man might serve God within the world in every position in life, the world itself being a realm in which God's grace is present all around us and we can partake of its qualities no matter what our station or condition.

John Calvin in his *Institutes* had previously argued that "your life is wickedly corrupt unless it be disposed to [God's] service." (*Institutes*, Bk. 1, Ch. II, 2)

Kuyper urged that even unbelievers are called by God to a special vocation in their "secular history" to "form by their very existence an indispensable link in the long chain of phenomena." Kuyper affirmed that in his mind "the highest art instincts are natural gifts and hence belong to those excellent graces which ... by virtue of Common Grace have continued to shine in human nature, "as do "all the natural utterances of human life."

In short, the realm of Common Grace is as vast as God's worldly creation.

To me a pertinent distinction can be made in the scope of God's intentions and the operations of God's will between two different realms of being. In the realm of Common Grace, God's intentions are, it appears to me, more generic, more diffuse, and less particularly focused – more common in other words – than when we consider the dynamics of special grace. In the realm of Common Grace God provides time and space for all creation, opportunities for things to happen according to possibilities provided by his ordering.

Where special grace is to apply, God's intentions would necessarily be very specific and very focused on only one soul at a time.

I find considerable and satisfactory support in scripture for God's having created for us a continuing realm of Common Grace.

First, God concluded that his creation of the world was good. (Genesis 1:25) He made us in his image as a reflection of his worth. (Genesis 1:27) After the great flood, God blessed Noah and his sons and found them worthy of receiving his covenant that they could peacefully be fruitful in the world and multiply therein. (Genesis 9:1,9)

Psalms 145 praises of the Lord God: "The Lord upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all look to you. And you give them their food in proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing." (14-16)

The word of the Lord to Ezekiel (*Ezekiel* 34) was for the care of his flock. The grace of the Lord was that the flock not be scattered, not be left as meat to all the wild beasts, not left weak and diseased. Those who had failed to care for the flock were to be discharged from their duties so that the Lord himself would lead the flock to good pasture, bind up that which was broken and strengthen that which was sick. Thus would the Lord God care for his flock in this temporal world of strife and woe.

We find in *Micah* a vision of Common Grace experienced: "But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid." (Micah 4:4)

The books of *Proverbs* and *Ecclesiastes* can well be considered as providing thoughtful reflections to help us intentionally set our courses constructively within the realm of Common Grace as it is given us by the Creator of all things.

*Ecclesiastes* pointedly reminds us that the realm of Common Grace has its limitations and its finitudes as, within that realm, there is both a time for giving birth and a time for dying; both a time for knocking down and a time for building; both a time for tears and a time for laughter; both a time for war and a time for peace.

I find the Book of Job, to me the most difficult of all the books in the Bible to really understand, to be a commentary on the realm of Common Grace. It can be a realm of prosperous grace given by God symbolized by Job's good fortune in the beginning and again, after his tribulations, at the end, but it is at the same time also a realm ruled over by God alone who can give and take away at his pleasure.

We can be tested in the realm of Common Grace. At one point in his cruel adversity, Job asks of God "What are human beings that you should take them so seriously, subjecting them to your scrutiny, that morning after morning you should examine them and at every instance test them?" (Job 7:17,18)

So, notwithstanding the grace which has been infused into the realm of Common Grace, no perfection for our kind can be found there. The realm of Common Grace is also the realm of inevitable death, of disease and broken bones, of loneliness and heartbreak.

Jesus noted that God would give sunlight to the evil and the good and would send rain on the just and the unjust. (*Matthew* 5:45). Moreover Jesus reminded us that God provides succor for the fowls of the air and gives beauty to the lilies and provides for the grass in the field, so he would provide for us with food and raiment knowing that we have legitimate need of sustenance. (*Matthew* 6: 25-34).

In this understanding of God's Common Grace I think Jesus spoke optimistically that simply "ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you." (*Luke* 11:9)

Nonetheless, for all of God's concern in providing a common home, Jesus advised that we are first to seek his kingdom. But that search too is not made arduous for in his parables Jesus confirms that the Kingdom of Heaven rests in part in the realm of Common Grace around us. The Kingdom of Heaven is analogized to a seed of the mustard plant and to leaven which is kneaded into bread.

(*Matthew 13:31, 33*) Part of God's grace is to give us capacity to reach out to him and his righteousness easily. The Lord's Prayer confirms that we may ask God for our daily bread and for his forgiveness. These proceeds of his grace are thus not at all far from us.

In the Nag Hammadi text the Gospel of Thomas, we are told Jesus said: "*Split a piece of wood, and I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there.*" This presumes that holiness is in the world around us and not only in some far off place like Heaven.

John Calvin in his Institutes wrote that: "Paul, accordingly, after reminding the Athenians that they "might feel after God and find him," immediately adds, that "he is not far from every one of us," (*Acts 17:27*); every man having within himself undoubted evidence of the heavenly grace by which he lives, and moves, and has his being." - (Book 1, Chapter 5:3).

Qur'an provides us with a beautiful passage describing God's gift of Common Grace: "He created the beasts which give you warmth and food and other benefits. How pleasant they look when you bring them home to rest and when you lead them out to pasture! They carry your burdens to far-off lands, which could not otherwise reach except with painful toil. Compassionate is your Lord and merciful. ... It is He who sends down water from the sky, which provides you with your drink and brings forth the pasturage on which your cattle feed. And with it He brings forth corn and olives, dates and grapes and fruits of every kind. Surely there is a sign for thinking men. He has pressed the night and the day, and the sun and the moon, into your service: the stars also serve you by His leave. ...It is He who has subdued the ocean so that you may eat of its fresh fish and bring up from its depths ornaments to wear. Behold the ships ploughing their course through it. All this that you may seek His bounty and render thanks. ... If you reckoned up God's blessings, you could not count them all." (*Surah 16 Al Nahl [The Bee] at 5 – 14, 18*)

Several seminal texts in the Confucian canon also express a sense for the importance of the realm of Common Grace. The *Doctrine of the Mean* (Ch. 1, 1) tells us that Heaven has provided a Way, the *Tao*, in which we live and breathe and find our sustenance and our experiences of daily grace. The text further advises us to: "Let finding and keeping the balance and harmony exist in perfection and a happy order will prevail throughout Heaven and Earth, and all things will be nourished and flourish." (Ch. 1, 5) From this ethical perspective, equilibrium and harmony give us highways for the successful appropriation of Common Grace.

The Chinese philosophical Taoist text the *Tao Te Jing* provides stimulating insights into the realm of Common Grace. I particularly like the verse: "The Great Tao is universal like a flood. How can it be turned to the right or left? All creatures depend on it and it denies nothing to anyone. It does its work but makes no claims for itself. It clothes and feed all. ... All things return to it as their home. ..." (*Tao Te Jing 34*)

We can feel something real about Common Grace in the following verse: "The Tao is like an empty bowl, which in being used can never be filled up. Fathomless, it seems to be the origin of all things. It blunts all sharp edges. It unties all tangles. It harmonizes all lights. It unites the world into one whole. Hidden in the deeps, yet it seems to exist forever. I do not know whose child it is; it seems to be the common ancestor of all, the Father of all things." (*Tao Te Jing 4*)

The aspect of Buddhism which intersects harmoniously with the realm of Common Grace is the Dharma. As with Common Grace, the Dharma just is. It spreads across space and connects all times

into a whole of existence. It is creation itself. The root of the word Dharma means to sustain. Dharma is that which sustains us in the world, that which maintains us in life, that which permits our being.

Though from the Buddhist perspective, as with the Chinese thought form of the *Tao*, the Dharma has no creator and is therefore not co-extensive with the ends of a spiritual teleology.

For Buddhists, as described by the Dalai Lama, the Dharma in which we have our being moves according to the mechanics of dependent co-arising or causation linking one thing or event to others. The awesomeness of the Dharma, I suggest, is the vastness and ceaselessness of such co-arising. It is that to which we must submit just as from a Christian perspective we are to submit our lives to the possibilities and the limitations inherent in the realm of Common Grace.

The Dalai Lama has advised us that dependent co-arising “challenges us to see things and events less in terms of black and white and more in terms of a complex interlinking of relationships, which are hard to pin down. And it makes it difficult to speak in terms of absolutes.” (*Ethics for the New Millennium*, 41) Moreover, he says within the understanding of dependent co-arising, “there is no self-interest completely unrelated to others’ interests.” (47)

But as captured in the story of the Fall of Adam and Eve from the grace of Eden, God did not provide us with Common Grace as a guarantee of any happiness or personal fulfillment. It is only a realm of possibility and opportunity in which we must find our way for better or worse during our days here on earth. To a very great extent the goodness available to us in the realm of Common Grace comes to us by means of our own – individual and collective - making. We are thus largely the authors of our own felicity in this realm created by God but left to us for use and misuse.

So, if we do not develop the Moral Sense within us to guide our decisions, then we ourselves degrade the gracious quality of the realm in which we move and rest, eat and sleep, and have our being.

## 2. The Moral Sense

Part of God's Common Grace was and is - until the end of time - the gift to each of us of a Moral Sense which we may, if we so choose, nourish and develop. Our Moral Sense provides us with the means of grace by which to resonate in harmony with the realm of Common Grace as provided for us by God.

"What does the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? (*Micah 6:8*) It would thus appear that each of us in our time has within us the requisite abilities to do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly before creation.

When a scribe affirmed to Jesus that one need only love God with all the heart and understanding and to love one's neighbor as oneself, Jesus affirmed in response that such a one "is not far from the kingdom of God." (*Mark 12: 32 -34*) I am grateful to my mentor Theodore Cardinal McCarrick for drawing my attention to this verse.

Most famously perhaps in the Christian tradition is the story in *Genesis (3:22)* of Adam and Eve acquiring knowledge of good and evil, or the capacity to make moral and ethical distinctions. The Bible thus sets forth as the essence of the human conundrum in this world the Moral Sense as a driver of human striving. Having an autonomous Moral Sense separates every human person from God and nature, giving rise to sin woundedness.

And yet the Moral Sense gives every human person the capacity to seek God or, if you will, the divine in its many forms and to hope for redemption from sin. Thus Jesus affirmed that we do not live by bread alone but by every word of God. (*Matthew 4:4*)

In *Luke 17:21* Jesus affirmed that that Kingdom of God would not come on some far off day but could be found in each of us right now, thus confirming his belief in our innate ability to intersect with divine purposes in this life.

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught us to ask for forgiveness and to forgive others, two states of mind predicated on our individual possession of the Moral Sense.

His noted admonition to us for living in the realm of Common Grace was to do unto others as we would have them do unto us, which course of action requires us to apply a Moral Sense, one, to know in ourselves what is good for us and, two, to open us to awareness of that other. (*Matthew 7:12*)

Knowing the every person has a Moral Sense, active or inchoate, permitted Jesus to affirm that "a good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." (*Matthew 12:35; Luke 6:45*)

Failure to provoke the Moral Sense into right action, said Jesus, had deleterious consequences: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: " (*Mark 7:21, 22*)

John Calvin believed that "There is within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, as awareness of divinity." (*Institutes, Chapter 3,1*) He continues: "God himself has implanted in all men a certain understanding of his divine majesty" and that "some conception of God is ever alive



in all men's minds." He also calls this inner predisposition "a sense of deity inscribed in the hearts of all."

I submit to you that here Calvin is affirming that we each possess a sense of the moral dimension that comes with being alive as a human person.

Aristotle advised that "The moral virtues then are engendered in us neither by nor contrary to nature; we are constituted by nature to receive them, but their full development in us is due to habit." According to him every human person born alive has potential from nature but must effect actualization of what is possible by his or her own efforts. Virtues we so acquire by exercising them. The habits which we form from the earliest age make all the difference in the world to our happiness and all else in our lives.

Aristotle pointed out that we have access to a particular kind of thinking which is fit for application in the realm of the Common Good. He spoke of "Prudence" which is "concerned with human goods, things about which deliberation is possible. ... Prudence is not concerned with universals only; it must take cognizance of particulars, because it is concerned with conduct. ..." (Another form of thinking noted by Aristotle – knowledge of first principles or *episteme* – is more appropriate for the realm of Special Grace.)

Cicero wrote for his son a long commentary on the Moral Sense which he titled *On Duty*. Cicero made a telling distinction between *homo sapiens* and animals. Our kind, he wrote, is endowed with reason, which gives us a power to carry our thoughts through to the consequences of things. We are bent towards undisguised openness, truth and sincerity; we are pleased with beauty, gracefulness, and symmetry.

The capacity for doing good Cicero called the "*honestum*". It arose within us from four sources: 1) finding the truth; 2) care to maintain social relationships and keep one's word and promises; 3) using our minds with determination; and 4) keeping our words and actions moderate within the bounds of due order and decency. Cicero believed that the virtue which consists in greatness and elevation of our souls is obtained with strength of the mind.

In the Roman Empire Stoics such as Seneca and Marcus Aurelius followed Cicero in insisting on the possible primacy of the Moral Sense in each person.

In his recorded sayings, Confucius was more descriptive of the human condition than he was analytical. He assumed the facticity of moral factors such as humane sentiments, faithfulness, reciprocity, and sincerity which he recommended as first principles for use in our lives. He even asserted that "Man was born for uprightness." (*The Analects*, BK. VI, Ch. 17) His ethics were grounded on the ability of each person to cultivate virtue (*te*), saying "See what a man does. Mark his motives. Examine in what things he rests. How can a man conceal his character?", adding "The virtuous rest in having humane sentiments; the wise desire to have them." (*The Analects*, BK. II, Ch. 10, BK. IV, Ch. 2)

Confucius believed firmly that "To see what is righteous and not to do it is want of courage." (*The Analects*, BK. III, Ch. 24) Thus "the mind of a man of character is conversant with righteousness; the mind of the mean man is conversant with gain." (*The Analects*, BK. IV, Ch. 16)



Mencius appropriately put the Moral Sense (what he called a *Tao*) in context when he said that “That whereby man differs from the lower animals is but small. The mass of the people cast it away, while upright men preserve it.” (*The Mencius*, BK. IV, Part 2, Ch.19)

In being challenged that people really do possess a Moral Sense with the argument that “man’s nature is indifferent to good and evil just as water is indifferent to east and west”, Mencius replied fittingly that “Water will flow indifferently to the east or the west, but will it flow indifferently up or down? The tendency of man’s nature to good is like the tendency of water to flow downward.” (*The Mencius*, BK. VI, Part I, Ch. 2)

“... the feeling of commiseration is essential to man, the feeling of shame and dislike is essential to man; the feeling of modesty and complaisance is essential to man; and the feeling of approving and disapproving is essential to man.” (*The Mencius*, BK. II, Part 1, Ch. 6)

Mencius took the virtues of benevolence and righteousness as the core dynamics of the Moral Sense, saying at one point that “All men have some things which they cannot bear – extend that feeling to what they can bear and benevolence will be the result. All men have some things which they will not do – extend that feeling to the things which they do and righteousness will be the result. If a man can give full development to the feeling which makes him shrink from injuring others, his benevolence will be more than can be called into practice. If he can give full development to the feeling which refuses to break through or jump over [a wall], his righteousness will be more than can be called into practice.” (*The Mencius* BK VII, Part 2, Ch. 31)

“Benevolence is the tranquil habitation of man and righteousness his straight path.” (*The Mencius*, BK IV, Part 1, Ch. 10, 2)

The *Tao Te Jing* in telling us about the Moral Sense has this to say about virtue:

Cultivate virtue in your own person and it becomes a genuine part of you.

Cultivate it in the family, and it will abide.

Cultivate it in the community, and it will live and grow.

Cultivate it in the state, and it will flourish abundantly.

Cultivate it in the world, and it will become universal.

From the vantage point of Buddhism, as the Dalai Lama reports, there is a “call for a radical reorientation away from our habitual preoccupation with self. It is a call to turn toward the wider community of beings with whom we are connected.” (223) In short, Buddhism demands exercise of the Moral Sense.

The *Dhammapada* text reminds us that “Gradually, little by little, moment by moment, the wise person should flush toxins from himself.” (*Dhammapada*, 239) “Irrigators guide the water. Fletchers shape the arrow’s shaft. Carpenters shape wood. The virtuous tame themselves.” (*Dhammapada* 145) “It is good to tame the mind, alighting, as it does, wherever it desires – swift, resistant to restraint. A tamed mind gives rise to ease.” (*Dhammapada* 35) “Just as rain cannot pierce a well-roofed house, so passion cannot pierce a well-cultivated mind.” (*Dhammapada* 14) “If a person

does something meritorious (which has *punna*), he should do it again and again. He must create that impulse in himself." (*Dhammapada* 118) "You are master of yourself. What other master could there be?" (*Dhammapada* 160)

Post-Reformation European natural law jurists such as Huig De Groot (Hugo Grotius 1583 – 1645) and Lutheran Samuel Puffendorf (1632 – 1694) made the Moral Sense the foundation of their thinking about obligations and duties to be expected from all people. Grotius, Puffendorf, and Emer de Vattel, were founders of our international law, which we used today to preserve the realm of the Common Good from aggression and wrongdoing on the part of national governments. There is a direct line of belief in the Moral Sense flowing from the arguments of those jurists to the human rights jurisprudence of our times.

Grotius posited that right reason revealed the moral turpitude or necessity of any act as conforming or not to rational nature authored by God. (*The Rights of War and Peace*, p. 21 -22) Human persons have access to right reason and so possess knowledge of good and evil, putting such knowledge to use thus refraining from doing harm.

Puffendorf affirmed that "...every man of a mature age, and entire sense, has so much Natural Light in him, as that with necessary care and due consideration, he may rightly comprehend at least those general precepts and principles which are requisite in order to pass our lives here honestly and quietly; and be able to judge that these are congruous to the nature of man." This sensibility Puffendorf further argued is a "kind of moral bridle ... put upon our liberty so that though the will does actually drive another way, yet we find ourselves hereby stuck as it were with an internal Sense."

William Blackstone in his famous Commentaries on the Laws of England which solidified constitutionalism and the Rule of Law for England and its colonies – including the United States - started his presentation with a similar affirmation about the Moral Sense. He wrote that there are eternal laws of good and evil coming from the Creator who "enabled human reason to discover so far as they are necessary for the conduct of human actions. Such among others are these principles: that we should live honestly, should hurt nobody, and should render to every one it's due."

Most famous for advocating the Moral Sense were the intellectual giants of the Scottish Enlightenment, Thomas Hutcheson, David Hume, and Adam Smith.

Adam Smith advanced the proposition that: "As therefore the Creator is a being, not only of infinite power and wisdom, but also of infinite goodness, he has been pleased so to contrive the constitution and frame of humanity that we should want no other prompter to inquire after and pursue the rule of right but only our self-love, that universal principle of action."

In his first book – *Theory of Moral Sentiments* – Smith posited that each of us has a conscience, which he called the objective observer of our actions sitting within our breasts. "It is thus that man, who can subsist only in society, was fitted by nature to that situation for which he was made." "It is reason, principle, conscience, the inhabitant of the breast, the man within, the great judge and arbiter of our conduct."

In making decisions, he advised we should always in the first place consider what would be the sentiments of that "cool and impartial spectator" looking at our situation from an insider's

perspective as to our best interests but with a view towards the judgments which others might make of our values, intentions and the consequences flowing from our actions.

Smith's successor as professor of moral philosophy at the University of Glasgow, Thomas Reid, proposed that our intuitive capacity to come to conclusions was enough to make us ethical. He argued that by intuition we would each come to first principles of conduct what would empower us to see our self-interest considered upon the whole of the realm of Common Grace and so suitably restrained from committing inequities and stupidities.

### 3. Use of the Moral Sense: Caring for the realm of Common Grace

Many faith and wisdom traditions expressly provide ethical advice as to how we may skillfully and faithfully carry out our duties to care for the realm of Common Grace while we live in it.

Aristotle would have us care for the realm in which we live by following a mean between too much and too little. Care for Common Grace would be for him an aesthetic, an art form.

Catholic Social Teachings concern themselves with the realm of Common Grace. The Magisterium of the Catholic Church is invoked that we may “deal with temporal affairs and order them according to God’s will”. The teachings address how best to live in this world during our allotted times here on earth. The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* addresses the human person, how to respect human dignity, human rights, how to apply the principle of the common good, the universal destination of goods, how to live by the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity, the family, human work, economic life, political community and the international community.

There is a school of social thought among many contemporary Rabbis which teaches an obligation to heal the world or *Tikkun Olam*.

Holy Qur’an provides guidance that as the stewards of God (*Khalifa*) everything we have is held in trust (*amanah*) from the Creator – our intelligence, our good will, our wealth, our worldly powers, our skills. As trustees of these things we are to use them constructively for good purposes. Qur’an instructs that we are to have faith and do good works. In short, we are to care for creation.

We are commanded to avoid corruption and injustice for God intends no injustice to humankind.

Second, in our decision-making as stewards of God, we are to consult with others, not impose our prejudices or willfulness on creation. This is the requirement of proceeding in this life by *shura*. No one of us is so wise or so insightful that we should act intemperately following our own preferences only. *Shura* imposes on us a form of moderation.

This requirement is affirmed by Qur’an’s guidance that we seek balance (*mizan*) in our lives.

Buddhism provides the eightfold path, not only as a means to attain enlightenment and escape from the samsaric world of anxiety and unsatisfiedness, but also as a remedial process of continuous mindfulness which enables us to rise about difficulties while living in such a world. We can step on to the path at any of the eight action guidelines. Improvement in our capacity at one step makes it easier to enhance our experience in the other steps. If we find a complete and systemic vision, we can then more easily set our resolve to move forward. If we are resolved, our speech will evolve towards better engagements. If we engage, then our actions will be more efficacious. When our actions bring benefit, our livelihood will prosper. When we are better off, we can do more. When we are energized, our awareness of all things will automatically expand and deepen. When we are more aware, we can center ourselves more easily on the essential. When we are centered, our vision will become more enlightened, and so on and so on in a process of continuous improvement in our lives.

Creatively and wisely using the Buddhist path of mindfulness, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand has proposed certain principles to care for economic development with sustainability and resilience. His standards are: to acquire the relevant knowledge, to act with integrity, to use

reason and facts in decision-making, to be moderation in setting goals and expectations, and to always be in a position of resilient adaptation to change.

In ancient China the movements of the *Tao* were analyzed in terms of alternating and intermingling states of *Yin* and *Yang*. A guide to appropriate action in any given flow of these two forces of destiny was created in the *I Ching*. This book sets forth 64 different states of mixed quantities *Yin* and *Yang*. Techniques divorced from human intention are employed to determine which combination of *Yin* and *Yang* is operative in the moment. Once the timely state is identified, its combination of *Yin* forces and *Yang* factors can be intuitively assessed for guidance as to what actions will be supported by the *Tao* at that moment and which actions will be opposed by the *Tao*.

Living well under the circumstantial forces so revealed will harmonize our will and our fortunes with the realm of life around us in the world. Thus we contribute to the good course of the world and do it no harm.

The 17 new United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are expressly designed, I would say, as needed steps to care for the realm of Common Grace. The SDGs seek to implement that portion of the UN Charter which proposes “to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom”. These 17 goals for governments, businesses, NGOs and individuals around the world look to more fulfilling lives for all people, the end of discriminations, implementation of the Rule of Law, and sustaining our planetary home as we exploit its natural resources, air and water.

#### 4. Science and the Moral Sense

Thinking about the Moral Sense has an illustrious pre-modern track-record, both East and West. From Confucius and Mencius to Aristotle, Cicero, and Marcus Aurelius advice was provided as to how to access and develop the Moral Sense. St Thomas Aquinas grounded his theology on an assumed capacity of the human to seek out virtue and avoid vice, to empower the will to do good and to form goodly habits of mind and conscience. Adam Smith wrote with great perspicacity on what he called the “moral sentiments”.

But only in recent decades has biological science documented the physical nature of the Moral Sense in our brain functions. Ironically, modern science has re-introduced into culture the acceptability of talking about the Moral Sense as a fixture of each human person. Science, true to its calling in uncovering for us the natural order in which we live and to which we as creatures must conform, has now given us knowledge of a natural law of human capacity, a natural law by which we can set our ethical expectations of ourselves and of others.

The Moral Sense is a natural fact, not a social convention vulnerable to critical deconstruction.

The new literature on neuro-science and evolutionary biology is vast and I am not expert in any of the relevant sub-fields. Let me only outline some of the high points of what we have learned and encourage you to explore the research on your own.

##### First, brain structure.

In mid-July neuroscientists published a map of the brain showing all its function areas so far discovered. The new map includes 83 known regions of brain competence and 97 previously unknown active regions. For example, they discovered that the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex includes over a dozen small zones of specialized mental activity. The project team recorded regional brain activities for 1,200 persons during tests of memory, language, and other kinds of thought.

Each human born alive has two distinct working parts of his or her brain. There is first the limbic system which mediates emotions triggered as a result of external stimuli. The limbic system supports a variety of functions including our emotions and our motivational drives both of which influence our behaviors. The limbic system is where the subcortical structures meet the cerebral cortex. Ethical and moral reasoning do not occur in the limbic system.

Central to the limbic system is the amygdala which generates self-protecting fear and flight emotions, sensations which ready the physical body for defensive responses. Social processing, specifically the evaluation of faces in social processing, is an area of cognition specific to the amygdala. States of mental dysphoria run from the amygdala to the right side of the prefrontal cortex. As this worry circuitry activates, we become preoccupied with anxiety or resentment and our mental acuity stumbles around.

Fortunately, happy music constructively stimulates the amygdala.

In addition, the hippocampus where memory and learning are promoted, becomes more pro-social when stimulated with music. The subpart of the hippocampus known as CA2 directs recognition of others. The CA2 component receives from and sends to other parts of the brain information on social involvement. The CA2 neurons are sensitive to vasopressin, which is a sibling neurohormone oxytocin, both of which foster trust and social cooperation.

But the second part of the brain in the two large hemispheres under our skulls exercises control over the amygdala. For example, the orbital frontal cortex has a top-down, oversight management role over the amygdala's antisocial emotional urges. The size of our prefrontal cortex sets us apart from apes. It is very flexible and so is capable of engaging in many different mental operations.

The orbital frontal cortex, which sits right behind and above our eyes, connects - neuron to neuron - the cortex or thinking brain with the amygdala, which triggers many emotions, and with the brain stem which directs non-judgmental, automatic responses. The orbital frontal cortex circuitry turns on whenever we choose the best response out of many possibilities. Good judgment happens when decisions are taken away from the amygdala and transferred to the slower processing frontal cortex parts of the brain.

The orbitofrontal cortex and the anterior cingulate cortex work together to assess how what you are doing is appraised and rewarded by others.

In this more reflective part of the brain, the medial frontal cortex and the orbital frontal cortex control our executive functions. Executive functions are cognitive processes that control other brain activities. Executive functions see to the initiation, consolidation, regulation, and inhibition of cognitive, language, motor and emotional processes. These processes underlie such functions as self-evaluation, planning, problem solving, controlling impulses and attention, and strategic selection or sequencing of behavior to reach desired goals.

Each of us has an unusual set of neurons called spindle cells which lead us to make "snap" decisions. Spindle cells are concentrated in the anterior cingulate cortex which directs our attention focus and coordinates our thoughts with our emotions and how our body will respond to our feelings. Humans have a thousand times more spindle cells than apes do.

The dorsolateral region of the frontal lobes is involved in thinking and language, and organizes mental representations of content. The left hippocampus is the location for express semantic memory/language competence.

The dorsal pathway in the left prefrontal cortex correlates with a greater personal sense of stability, security and belonging. In general attachments and tender feelings engender more growth of new brain cells.

The lateral prefrontal cortex correlates with socially driven self-control while the making of judgments according to social norms associates with the ventromedial prefrontal cortex.



Moral reasoning is linked strongly to activity in both frontal lobes and the areas surrounding the temporoparietal junction.

When research subjects give to charity, the subgenual areas of their brains show increased blood flow indicating that such areas were working away at promoting the charitable process.

Neurotransmitting chemicals which are associated with social acceptance and belonging are serotonin and the corticotrophin releasing hormone. These chemicals flow among parts of the brain as a communications mechanism to regulate our bodily functions and behaviors.

Each human brain has so called mirror neurons which read the intentions of others, give rise to empathy, and permit us to understand the perspectives and emotions of others.

However, the same brain systems which give us a moral sense also dispose us to addiction. Our system of neurotransmission within the brain eagerly responds to the introduction of exogenous chemicals such as alcohol, marijuana, heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine. These intruding external chemicals disrupt the normal workings of our neurotransmissions by releasing large floods of dopamine into the limbic brain, which gives us feelings of pleasure and euphoria unjustified by our real circumstances. We feel secure and happy for a time, but in a bad way reflected in self-destructive behaviors.

In addition, new research by Frank Hartmann, Philip Eskenazi, and Wim Rietdijk at Erasmus University point to operations of the mirror neurons which lead to unethical behavior. They argue that mirror neurons dispose us to follow the norms of those around us – to go with the crowd. So, if the crowd has bad habits, we will mimic such habits without much sense of wrongdoing.

### Second, brain chemistry – Oxytocin.

Oxytocin is a mammalian neurochemical associated with forming social relationships. Oxytocin is normally produced by the paraventricular nucleus of the hypothalamus and released by the posterior pituitary gland. It serves both as a neurotransmitter in the brain and a hormone flowing through the blood.

In expecting mothers, it is secreted to insure that the mother will nurse and care for her newborn infant. Oxytocin is released into the bloodstream as a hormone in response to stretching of the cervix and uterus during labor and with stimulation of the nipples from breastfeeding. This helps with birth, bonding with the baby, and milk production. Oxytocin thus is a natural cause of continued human survival.

Bonding activity of a mother with her newborn triggers in the child the release of a flood of oxytocin, prolactin, endorphins and dopamine, which produce positive feelings but also build brain structure.

The gene which codes for the production of Oxytocin responds to signals arising from methylation. The levels of methylation found on the Oxytocin gene are good predictors of a

person's comfort in forming social bonds and judging the emotional states of others. The methylation levels of the Oxytocin are linked to the strength of activity seen in regions of the brain that are crucial to the social functioning of human persons.

Oxytocin reduces stress and amygdala activation. It attenuates the connectivity between the amygdala and the brain stem functions which heighten fear and anti-social impulses. Oxytocin increases our pro-social inclination causing our social anxiety to decline and our affiliative motivation to increase.

Lower levels of oxytocin are found in people in chronic pain, who are depressed or alcoholic, or who have autism or schizophrenia.

Humans who received oxytocin scored higher in trust on the Revised NEO Personality Inventory. Moreover, in a risky investment game, experimental subjects given nasally administered oxytocin displayed "the highest level of trust" twice as often as did the control group.

Paul Zak has observed thousands of volunteers playing the ultimatum game. Those with higher levels of Oxytocin show more trust and those who decide to trust others and those who are trusted to reciprocate both experience a resulting increase in secretions of Oxytocin.

When Oxytocin levels are higher, people become more social, that is, more engaged with others. They thus become less prone to the temptations of Nietzsche's Will to Power or the egocentric fixation holding that life must be a solitary struggle for personal survival at any cost.

Those who sing together in groups - consider generations of good Calvinists together in church singing hymns – the experience increases their Oxytocin levels and so they become more communal, more trusting, and more trustworthy.

However, oxytocin is not a panacea bringing about human happiness. It appears that oxytocin can dispose us to discriminations. It tends to bind us to those closest to us, to those with whom we have mutual engagement, and distances us from "strangers". Thus, oxytocin may also promote tribalism, a noted source of tension, discrimination, and enmity among humans.

Interestingly, when rational economic decision-making is undertaken, the brain produces high levels of cortisol, epinephrine and cortico-steroids, all associated with elevated levels of stress. Serotonin and oxytocin levels are minimized and the general immune system shows suppression of capacity.

### Third, evolutionary biology.

Current thinking as to how our species evolved over the last 500,000 or more years from apes and hominids to a creature considered worthy of God's fatherhood rejects Social Darwinism and ego-centrism as having been helpful. Rather it now appears more likely that social relationships and communal cohesion gave us evolutionary superiority. Only a sophisticated moral faculty in each human born alive could have made such interdependent success possible.

We evolved to have bigger brains than apes and early hominids and our bigger brains made us more social as noted above.

Consider the role of language. Language is made possible by the physical structure of our throats and tongues, structures which no other animal has. Language emerged about 50,000 years ago as our *homo sapien* ancestors emerged from their African homeland. The generation of articulate sounds makes language possible. Language then makes thought and conceptualization possible. Thought and the transfer of ideas and feelings via vocalized conceptions makes society possible. Responsibilities can be allocated; information can be absorbed from others; learning can become habitual. Thus was our capacity to survive made possible by skills of interdependency made possible by linguistic communication.

Another form of social communication important for our evolution was permitted by the whites of our eyes. With darker pupils surrounded by white, expressions of anger, fear, humor, approval, love could and can be read by others to build relationships of trust and understanding. Consider your comfort in conversing with someone wearing sunglasses so dark that you can't see their eyes.

The cultivation of fire demanded reliable allocation of social responsibility as did both hunting and gathering and sedentary farming. Making first stone tools, then bronze ones, and finally smelting and forging instruments of iron were learned skills with a social component. Such skills were not the intangible intellectual capital proprietary of single individuals living on their own in rude conditions.

Neanderthals apparently were not specialized in their life-sustaining activities, mostly hunting for big game. But their rivals, our ancestors, did specialize. They divided responsibilities and collaborated. They won; the Neanderthals lost.

Social skills of homo sapiens extended to the breeding and use of dogs. Dogs are the only mammals which can sustain eye contact with humans. Dogs guarded homes and fires. Dogs made hunting more successful.

Curtis Marean speculates that our Homo Sapiens ancestors were able to leave their African homeland beginning around 70,000 BCE and colonize the world because they combined social skills with projectile weapons. Our ancestors formed hunting teams which became the top predator in all environments.

And let us not forget the importance of role responsibilities based on gender. Mothers needed to bond with children and to trust fathers. Fathers needed to rely on mothers to raise their children and keep home and hearth. The human child needed care and protection from parents and relatives for more than a decade. If humans had not cared for one another in the far distant past and in our infancies, we would not be here today. These skills of stewardship cannot be overlooked as a human asset necessary for both survival and flourishing, especially millennia ago when there was no government funded social safety net.

But let us not overlook the social skills of an infant. The very little ones can successfully solicit and secure the attentive care not only of mothers but of many others in their sensory purview. Unlike apes, humans evolved in cooperatively breeding social groups where "mothering" was a shared function.

We have evolved so that loneliness is harmful. Those with fewer close relationships are 4.2 times more likely to come down with a cold than those with many friendships. Feeling lonely or socially isolated bumps up our risk for coronary heart disease and strokes by 50%, on a par with light smoking of tobacco, anxiety, and occupational stress. Loneliness correlates with higher rates of cognitive decline. The most lonely people in another study of those over 50 had blood-pressures 30 points higher than those who were not lonely.

A study of the health outcomes of 80,000 women found that those who frequently attended religious services were 27% less likely to be depressed and had a 20% lower mortality rate than the women who were less scrupulous in religious observance.

Jonathan Haidt has proposed a Moral Foundations Theory that evolution has left us all with five existential challenges we must prepare ourselves to meet: protecting and caring for children, reaping benefits of two-way partnerships, forming cohesive coalitions, forging beneficial relationships within hierarchies, and avoiding contaminants. Our abilities to master these challenges or not gives rise to deep-seated personality orientations which unconsciously or sub-consciously shape our character one fixed way or another. Our particular ethical orientation – our moral sense, therefore, is psycho-somatically structurally given to us by nature as a result of evolution.

Worthy of note also is the fact that people can be classified into various personality types such as on the Myers-Briggs personality inventory or the Gallop Organization's Strength Finder. These patterns of behavior, clusters of aptitudes and abilities, habitual modes of feeling and assessing, indicate a biological substructure within our persons which can be molded for different forms of consistent thought and action, in short, our character.

## 5. Modernism and the Moral Sense

In gross my thesis is that Modernism undermines and overthrows the Moral Sense, replacing it with a totalizing selfishness which cuts us off from participating in Common Grace.

In terms of Christian metaphors, Modernism condemns us to eternal alienation from all that surrounds us, to everlasting sin, and permanent exile from God. It encourages us with tempting rationalizations and modes of discourse to ignore our responsibilities and overlook the need to tend to the realm of Common Grace.

The triumphal self as prescribed by Modernism lives in isolation and, ultimately, only through relationships of power and exploitation.

I very much agree with Abraham Kyper that the source of Modernism lies in the French Enlightenment. But I locate the precise source of its hubris in the deconstructive recommendations of Jean Jacques Rousseau.

It was Rousseau, acting out the bitterness engendered by his Calvinist Father and the Calvinism of Geneva in his youth, who argued for the total freedom of the self to be and do whatever it wanted without constraint. His famous line was “Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains.” If this is true, then all persons are victims of circumstance with an entitlement to have all their chains broken.

As we see today, if gender is a chain, then break it and classify yourself as who you feel you really are. If sexual conventions keep you from having pleasure, then ignore them. If poverty is a chain holding you down in life, then someone needs to break it and enrich you. If parents or spouses are holding you back, then push them away and be free of such annoying entanglements. After all, in the Rousseauist canon of right, goodness, and truth, life is all about only you.

Rousseau’s demands for liberation of the essential self from constraint were given compelling additional force by Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche correctly saw that reason unleashed without any tie to the Moral Sense was the ultimate destructive power reducing law and convention to mere discourse, to easily dismissed silly trifles thrown out by sad and disheartened souls. For Nietzsche, the great human truth was the will to power. We saw how well that worked for the realm of Common Grace with Lenin, Hitler, and many other dictators – and some corporate leaders.

In the United States, however, another modern idea arose in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to un-tether the self from the constraints of the Moral Sense. I refer here to the Social Darwinism of Herbert Spencer. Spencer, resting his case on science not intuition, argued that humans being mere mammals have no inherent Moral Sense. For Spencer and those who follow him, selfish aggression is the moral norm – the survival of the fittest in a dog-eat-dog world.

Sadly after our Civil War, for reasons that seem lost in time, many Americans conflated Spencer’s ideas on life as competition with echoes of Calvinist pre-destination to derive the very American social philosophy of rugged individualism and brute capitalism as articulated by Andrew Carnegie, William Graham Sumner, and, in part, by President Theodore Roosevelt. The widely promoted idea was that God only loved winners in the race of life and provided no succor for the losers. Thus, winning – say by making lots of money or by imposing one’s will on others – was evidence of one’s elect status in God’s eyes.

Freud with his creation of psycho-analysis deepened Modernism in a dynamic way. He built upon Rousseau's eagerness to distance oneself from all circumstantial impingements. Freud was quite harsh on the repressive role played by the superego, which in many cases was seen as the cognate for the Moral Sense in a personality. In a sense, Freud gave to Social Darwinism and Nietzsche's emphasis on the will to power a sophisticated demeanor drawing on a science of the mind.

The untouched direct extension of Rousseau's proposition on free will down to our time calls for the destruction of all constraints on human will – no god, no king, no priest, no law, no respect for others, no parental authority – just total confusion and an endless struggle to assert one's primacy over all others.

Modernism at its core irredeemably rejects the constraints imposed by the Moral Sense. Operationally, Modernism denies the existence of the Moral Sense and acts to deconstruct its convictions and its conventions which arise out of regard for others.

Today, for example, there is no need under the Modernist canon to read boring books if social media is more open to your presentation of self to the world. Why especially should a free thinking person put up with the tiring and out-of-date discourse of dead people? There is no need either to study history or old, formalist art or to put up with any inconvenient facts. If certain opinions or points of view cause you to experience the anxiety of interpersonal micro-aggressions, then your teachers have a duty to issue "trigger-warnings" before speaking or assigning offensive readings. Your subjective freedom to be secure in your ego-world trumps all truth. Under Modernism there is no truth, only self-referential discourse.

Again using the Biblical metaphor of Adam and Eve's Fall from God's grace, we can suggest that all Rousseau did was to place Eden inside the individual self. Thus, the Fall was overcome as each person could return to Eden which was not a place so-to-speak but only a mental state available to all. The Kingdom of Heaven, then, is within us already and we don't need to have faith, worry about our neighbors or do anything burdensome or of social consequence to enjoy it.

Echoes of this conceit appear in Abraham Maslow's famous hierarchy of human fulfillments. At the apex of the good life he put self-actualization – the flowering of the self in all directions at once.

I believe that Pope Francis in his recent Encyclical *Laudato Si'* has very accurately spoken of the Modernism which so worried Kyper in his use of the construct "anthropocentrism". Pope Francis correctly argues in his Encyclical that anthropocentrism is the cause of many of our current distempers and of our feckless disregard for the needs of our planet.

Modernism causes us to disparage and even ignore the Moral Sense, thus taking from us the capacity to care for the realm of Common Grace. That realm under the terms of Modernism is there for our selfish exploitation and no more. We are under no constraint of duty to care at all, only if and when we want to.

Now let me venture to suggest that the anthropocentrism which is promoted by Modernism can have other cultural roots which contribute to our current difficulties. Any ideology which authorizes a self to act as if it were God acts counter to the best interests of the realm of Common Grace; such a self rather acts in perfect harmony with Modernism.

I refer here to any excess of hubris as the Greeks termed it or the Sin of Pride in the Thomistic world of vices and virtues. When Zi Jinping refers to the manifest destiny of the Chinese to be a master race as was the conceit of ancient emperors, or when Vladimir Putin invokes the destiny of Russians to be the Third Rome, we see at work – unrestrained by Modernism – the imposition of self-aggrandizement on the realm of Common Grace.

But I refer most emphatically to the idolatry of *Shirk* which stands behind all contemporary Islamic extremism. Qur'an forbids any person from setting himself or herself up as God's partner or equal. Qur'an holds that only God has the right to end a life. Believers may only warn us of our shortcomings. It is up to God alone to act as alpha and omega in the world. I can find no Qur'anic justifications for the contemporary killings done in the name of God, who moreover is compassionate and merciful. No good Muslim fully knows the mind of God and so no good Muslim can say what God intends in any give life. God may forgive a soul on the day of judgment or may not. It is not ours to know.

Our function in this life, according to Holy Qur'an is to serve God as a faithful and wise steward (*khalifa*) of his creation. ( , , , , ) and that would seem to imply loving care of all that he has created – the realm of His anointed Common Grace.

The Modern self is just such hubris awaiting the arrival of its Nemesis. And, its Nemesis may be arriving in our time for, with all our free will, we seem to have neither security nor happiness.



## 6. Moral Sense needed to restrain Modernism

It is Modernism, not the Moral Sense, which drives the temper of our times. It is Modernism which promotes all around us the ethics of nihilism and the unrestrained will to power which can easily overcome the better angels of our natures.

To save us from the extremes of Modernism, the Moral Sense must be restored to our consciences and to our lives as we live them together.

The mission of the Caux Round Table is to restore confidence in the Moral Sense. Its execution of that mission is to offer ethical principles which inject the Moral Sense into capitalism and public governance.

In 1994 members of the Caux Round Table – business leaders from Europe, Japan and the United States – published the first set of global principles for business. These 7 principles adopted the stakeholder approach to capitalism, what we call a Moral Capitalism. In doing so they amalgamated respect for human dignity from Catholic social teachings, stewardship from American Calvinism, and the principle of *Kyosei* from Japanese Buddhism and Shinto. Literally *Kyosei* means “symbiosis” or mutually living off one another. It is a systems understanding of the realm of Common Grace which depends on Buddhist intuitions about dependent co-arising and Shinto respect for life forces intersecting with one another for mutual benefit.

At the practical level of stakeholder engagement, Moral Capitalism posits that for every company stakeholder relationships are part of its intangible assets which can appreciate leading to higher present value or can depreciate lowering the capital value of a firm. In an echo of Thomas Reid and consistent with Common Grace where the self has dignity and value, Moral Capitalism demands that self-interest be considered upon the whole through activation of the Moral Sense.

In 2002 the Caux Round Table a set of ethical principles for public governance which synchronized with the principles for business so that the public and private components of modern society can both be graced with harmonious responsibility. The ethics of public governance, we assert, flow directly from the proposition that public office is a public trust. Stewardship and fiduciary obligations of loyalty and due care should constrain the abuse of power.

We have further published ethical principles for NGOs and for those who own property and wealth.

## 7. The Calling of a Christian

So we now know where we are – living under a regime of Modernism – and where we are going – towards more and more Modernism.

What, therefore, should we do?

Acknowledge, activate, encourage, reward, the operations of the Moral Sense.

Christians, I suggest, should be front and center in this work. This work, I suggest, is the social vocation of a Christian.

The personal vocation of a Christian is seeking to be part of that eternal presence fully and ultimately provided by the Kingdom of Heaven through a chosen form of Special Grace.

Jesus affirmed that we are to live by every word of God – through our fully activated Moral Sense. Jesus taught us the Second Commandment to love our neighbor, which could not be possible unless we turned on our Moral Sense. Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan who chose to care. Jesus told the parable of taking care of the money entrusted to us. His example is that of a good shepherd.

In all these ways, and more, Jesus pointed to the road for his disciples and followers of taking up work in the world to care for the realm of Common Grace.

If we are to use his name, then should we not also use his ways?

Others may pass on their responsibilities. Others may ignore or truncate or abuse their Moral Sense. But Christians must not.

First, secure safe havens for the Moral Sense.

Second, take the intellectual lead in the study and teaching of how best to access and enhance the Moral Sense in individuals, families, communities, and the world.

Third, be personal role models for the Moral Sense in its highest and best forms of activation.

Fourth, hold out the right hand of friendship to any who similarly seeks to care for the realm of Common Grace, be they Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Chinese or pagan.

Let me conclude as I began with advice from Abraham Kuyper:

“... the unbelieving world excels in many things. Precious treasures have come down to us from the old heathen civilization. In Plato you find pages which you devour. Cicero fascinates you and bears you along by his noble tone and stirs up in you holy sentiments. And if you consider your own surroundings, that which is reported to you, and that which you derive from the studies and literary productions of professed infidels, how much there is which attracts you, with which you sympathize and which you admire. It is not exclusively the spark of genius or the splendor of talent, which excites your pleasure in the words and actions of unbelievers, but it is often the beauty of their character, their zeal, their devotion, their love, their candor, their faithfulness and their sense of honesty.”

Could this be a worthy global project for the Dutch?