



REFORMED

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*For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:
in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;
he shall set me up upon a rock.*

—Psalm 27:5

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And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon: of shittim wood shalt thou make it. A cubit shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof; foursquare shall it be: and two cubits shall be the height thereof: the horns thereof shall be of the same. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, the top thereof, and the sides thereof round about, and the horns thereof; and thou shalt make unto it a crown of gold round about. And two golden rings shalt thou make to it under the crown of it, by the two corners thereof, upon the two sides of it shalt thou make it; and they shall be for places for the staves to bear it withal. And thou shalt make the staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold. And thou shalt put it before the vail that is by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the testimony, where I will meet with thee. And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations. Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering; neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon. And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonements: once in the year shall he make atonement upon it throughout your generations: it is most holy unto the LORD.

—Exodus 30:1–10 (See also 37:25–28.)

The Altar of Incense

The sixth article of furniture in the tabernacle, and the final article in the sanctuary, was the altar of incense. It was made of fine dark acacia (shittim) wood and overlaid with pure gold. The altar was a foot and a half square at the base and three feet high. The four corners at the top of the altar were decorated by upturned horns, and the whole thing was topped with a border or crown of gold. The altar of incense was placed farthest back in the sanctuary, just in front of the great veil that led to the holy of holies. As the priest entered the holy place, the altar of incense would be directly in front of him, against the veil.

The purpose of the altar of incense was to burn a sweet and fragrant incense day and night. The incense was a special blend of frankincense and other spices that was to be made according to the exact specifications Jehovah gave to Moses. No other blend of incense was ever to be used, and no Israelite was permitted to use the same blend of incense in his own home, lest he be cut

off from Israel. The priest was to burn incense on the altar every morning and again every evening. The hot coals that would burn the incense would be carried in a censer from the altar of burnt offering into the holy place. A bronze grate atop the altar would hold the coals and the burning incense.

Now that we have seen all the furniture in the holy place, shall we take a moment to imagine what it must have been like for a priest in the sanctuary? Standing in the middle of the holy place, the walls to his left and right were radiant, shining gold. The curtain behind him and the veil in front of him and the ceiling over him were the finest linen, blue and purple and scarlet, with mighty angels embroidered thereon. To his right the table of shewbread held its feast of twelve loaves. The whole scene was lit by the cheerful light of the flames in the golden candlestick to his left. How the golden walls must have gleamed! How royal must have been the scene under the rich colors of the tapestries in that warm glow!

Perfuming the air was the delicious sweetness of the incense burning on its altar in front of him, which scent could be found only here and no other place in all the camp of Israel. How beautiful was the holy place! How striking to the senses and to the soul! And to think that just beyond the veil, the Almighty God sat upon his throne! And to think that he delighted to dwell with his covenant people! What a good, gracious God, who takes the likes of the Israelites—the likes of us—into his home!

As for the altar of incense, what was its meaning? The burning incense represented the prayers of God's people (Ps. 141:2; Luke 1:10; Rev. 5:8; 8:3–4). The altar was just in front of the veil of the most holy place, where Jehovah was enthroned upon the ark. As the smoke of the incense wafted from the sanctuary into the holy of holies, so the prayers of God's people ascend from earth to his

throne in heaven. And what does God think of our prayers? They are delicious to him! They delight him! They smell lovely, with a scent like nothing else!

How can it be that our weak and halting and faltering prayers, from sinful lips, can delight the holy God? First, because our priest, Jesus Christ, takes them in his hands and brings them to God and offers them to him; and our priest is worthy! Second, because our priest, Jesus Christ, cleanses our prayers with his blood to purge them of all their sin so that they are acceptable to God. The coals that sent up the incense were covered in the drippings and the blood of the burnt offerings. So the lifeblood of our savior covers our prayers and sanctifies them to God. Therefore, seeing our great high priest, let us come boldly unto the throne of grace (Heb. 4:14–16).

—AL

CORRESPONDENCE

Intrinsically Righteous?

The following comment was made on Remnant Reformed Church's YouTube page about a sermon on Lord's Day 24.¹ Although the comment was made regarding a sermon and was not written to *Reformed Pavilion*, and although a briefer answer will be posted on the YouTube channel, we take the opportunity to file this fuller answer under *Correspondence* in the magazine.

The problem for yourself, and other Reformed adherents, is a denial of what regeneration actually accomplishes, whereby the denial is this: That the regenerated one partakes in the sinless, righteous, and holy HUMAN NATURE of Jesus Christ. In other words, at regeneration the elect child of God receives, as Peter clearly states in his Epistle, the DIVINE NATURE; that is the

very resurrected life of Jesus Christ by His Spirit.

The believer has been freed from sin, made a new creature which thus, as John writes, "CANNOT SIN" because he is born again. This why the believer is a doer of the Law and not, as the ungodly are, hearers only. They are made now INTRINSICALLY righteous and it is in this reality whereby they do good works - a good work is any work conformable to the Law - and at the Judgement Day Jehovah will declare that one a truly just person, i.e. actually without sin (see Romans 2.)

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Remnant's sermon on Lord's Day 24 of the Heidelberg Catechism was a defense of the

¹ Andrew Lanning, "Justification Defended," sermon preached on March 1, 2026, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHe3TarmtUo&t=83s>.

Reformed doctrine of justification by faith alone. Lord's Day 24 answers the question, "Why cannot our good works be the whole or part of our righteousness before God?" Our commenter opposes the doctrine of justification by faith alone and argues that our good works are, in fact, our righteousness before God. By his comment our commenter reveals that a vast chasm exists between the Reformed faith and its opponents. Our commenter also reveals that Lord's Day 24 and its defense of justification by faith alone was not only necessary in 1563, when the Catechism was first published, but it is just as necessary in 2026 as a bulwark against the many foes of Jesus Christ and his righteousness.

The Issue

The issue between our commenter and the Reformed faith is whether the believer's righteousness before God is a righteousness that is external to the believer or a righteousness that is internal in the believer.

The Reformed faith teaches that the believer's righteousness before God is a righteousness that is entirely external to the believer. The believer's righteousness is exclusively the righteousness of Jesus Christ that Christ himself has accomplished. This righteousness includes all that Jesus ever thought, said, and did. It includes all Jesus' perfect love for God and perfect obedience to God's law. It includes all Jesus' perfect atonement for his people's sins by his death on the cross. God imputes this perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ to the believer. The believer himself is not righteous. Even the believer's best works are defiled with sin and are "filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6). The believer "worketh not" (Rom. 4:5). The believer is "ungodly" (v. 5). The believer is "without works" (v. 6). But God imputes, counts, and reckons to the believer all the perfect work of Jesus Christ. As the believer stands before God at God's tribunal and at the bar of God's justice, God declares that the sinful believer is righteous for Jesus' sake. God reckoned the sins of his people to Christ (though Christ had not sinned), and God reckons the righteousness of Christ to his people (though we did not obey). "For he hath made him

to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:21). For the Reformed faith, justification is the blessed imputation to God's people in Christ of the alien, external righteousness of another, "even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works" (Rom. 4:6).

Against this doctrine our commenter teaches that the believer's righteousness before God is a righteousness that is internal in the believer. God regenerates the believer, implanting in the believer the new life of Christ. The believer has within himself the sinless, righteous, and holy human nature of Jesus. Thus the believer has within himself, by the internal operation of the Spirit of Christ, the actual resurrected life of Jesus Christ. Out of this life of Jesus in him, the believer obeys God's law and does good works. These good works are conformable to God's law. The unbeliever, who has not this life of Christ in him, can only hear the law; but the believer, being a new creature in Christ, not only hears the law but also does the law by the power of Christ. The believer's righteousness is not external to him but is internal in him. It is an intrinsic righteousness that he himself possesses. And when the believer stands before God at the great day of judgment, God will declare such a doer of the law to be truly just. When God makes his declaration that the believer is righteous, God will not be declaring that Christ's perfect obedience has been counted to the believer but that Christ's perfect life is in the believer. For our commenter justification is by works. Our commenter's proof for his doctrine is Romans 2—for example, Romans 2:13: "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified."

Our commenter has erred in two respects.

First Error

First, our commenter proposes a righteousness for the believer that the scriptures explicitly reject. Our commenter proposes that God justifies the godly doer of the law, but the scriptures insist that God only justifies the believer by faith, without

the deeds of the law. For example, “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Gal. 2:16).

In this connection, our commenter misunderstands Romans 2. He takes that chapter to be a program for how a man can be declared righteous before God. But the context shows that the apostle is not teaching how a man can be declared righteous before God. In fact, just the opposite. The apostle is teaching that no one is righteous before God. It does not matter if one is religious (the “Jew”) or non-religious (the “Gentile”). “For there is no respect of persons with God” (Rom. 2:11). What will happen to everyone who sins, whether a man is religious or non-religious, is that he will perish. Those who are non-religious will perish without ever having heard God’s law. Those who are religious will perish under the law that they heard. “For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law” (v. 12).

It is in this context that the apostle explains why God will condemn even religious people who have ever sinned even once in their lives. It is because God requires absolute perfection in a man. In his righteous judgment God “will render to every man according to his deeds” (Rom. 2:6). Therefore, in order for religious people to be righteous before God, they must be “doers of the law” (v. 13). That is, they must be perfect doers of the law. It is not enough that they are religious people, that is, that they are “hearers of the law” (v. 13). They must do everything that they hear—perfectly, perpetually, exactly, and without ever having failed. And if there has ever been even the slightest act or thought or motive of disobedience, then they cannot be justified but must perish. In the great day of judgment, when Jesus Christ on behalf of God shall judge all men and shall reveal all secrets, everyone who has ever sinned, whether religious or not, should perish. “For as many as

have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law...in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel” (vv. 12, 16).

So far from being a program for how a man can be declared righteous by doing the law, this is a declaration that no man whatsoever is righteous! Indeed, “there is none righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10). Therefore, “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight” (v. 20).

The good news of the gospel for sinners is that there is another righteousness. It is not a righteousness from the law but a righteousness without the law. It is not the righteousness of a mere man but the righteousness of God. It is not a righteousness that comes by working but a righteousness that comes by believing. It is not a righteousness internal to the believer but the righteousness of another, external to the believer.

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. (Rom. 3:21–24)

The scriptures’ authoritative conclusion, contrary to our commenter, is “that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Rom. 3:28). And thanks be to God that it is so! For if a man stands with his deeds before God in the great day of judgment, then God “will render to every man according to his deeds” (2:6), and that man will perish. But when a man stands with Christ’s deeds counted as his own before God, that man shall live. “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him” (5:8–9).

Second Error

Our commenter's second error is that he attempts to make the matter of justification to be a matter of regeneration. Or, to say the same thing, our commenter attempts to define the believer's righteousness before God in terms of the believer's regeneration. Because the Reformed faith denies that a man's regeneration is his righteousness before God, our commenter accuses the Reformed faith of denying the wonder of regeneration.

The fact of the matter is that the Reformed faith does not deny the wonder of regeneration. The Reformed faith teaches that regeneration is the mighty work of God in the believer, according to which he implants the new life of Christ in the believer. Whereas the child of God was dead in trespasses and sins, that child of God is quickened and made a partaker of the powerful resurrection life of Christ. Out of that new life of Christ in him, the believer lives unto God in love and gratitude according to all the commandments of God's holy law. Out of that new life of Christ in him, the believer does the good works that God has before prepared for him to do. Because of the life of Christ in him, the believer loves God and loves his neighbor. Oh yes, the child of God carries his totally depraved old man of sin with him all his days upon this earth. That old man of sin never improves. That old man of sin pollutes all the believer's good works, so that the believer is never perfect in this life. But the child of God is truly a new creature in Christ, called out of darkness into God's marvelous light.

In fact, I could agree with the main lines of our commenter's description of regeneration in his comment. Oh, I would have some questions for our commenter that might reveal some disagreements. For instance, what does our commenter mean that the regenerated believer cannot sin? Is our commenter teaching some form of perfectionism? Or for another instance, what does our commenter mean that the regenerated believer receives the divine nature? The phrases—cannot sin; partakers of the divine nature—are biblical, but I am not sure what our commenter understands those phrases to mean. Nevertheless, our

commenter's main line of thought—the child of God truly has the sinless and powerful life of Christ implanted in him and lives and works out of that new life—I agree with.

Here is the Reformed faith's confession of regeneration and its effects, from the Canons of Dordt 3–4:

Article 11. Moreover, when God accomplishes this his good pleasure in the elect, or works in them true conversion, he not only causes the gospel to be externally preached to them, and powerfully illuminates their minds by the Holy Spirit, that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God; but by the efficacy of the same regenerating Spirit he pervades the inmost recesses of the man; he opens the closed heart, softens the hardened heart, and circumcises the heart that is uncircumcised; he infuses new qualities into the will and makes that which was dead, alive; that which was evil, good; that which was unwilling, willing; that which was refractory, obedient; and he actuates and strengthens it, so that, like a good tree, it can bring forth the fruits of good actions.

Article 12. And this is that regeneration, that new creation, that resurrection from the dead, that making alive so highly celebrated in scripture, which God, without us, worketh in us. But this is in no wise effected by the mere outward sound of instruction, by moral suasion, or by such a mode of operation that, after God has performed his part, it still remains in the power of man to be regenerated or not to be regenerated, to be converted or not to be converted; but it is entirely a supernatural work, most powerful, and at the same time most pleasing, wonderful, mysterious, and unspeakable; neither lesser nor inferior in its efficacy to creation or the resurrection of the dead, as the scripture (inspired by the author of this work)

declares; so much so that all those in whose hearts God works in this marvelous manner are certainly, infallibly, and effectually regenerated and do actually believe. Whereupon the will, now renewed, is not only acted upon and moved by God, but by the act of God also acts itself. On account of which even man himself is rightly said, by virtue of that grace received, to believe and to repent.

No, the Reformed faith does not deny God's wonderful and gracious work of regeneration in his elect people. What the Reformed faith *does* deny is that a man's regeneration *makes him righteous before God*. A man's regeneration is of no account whatsoever toward his justification. All the wonderful change that God works in a man in regeneration is entirely excluded from being any part of that man's righteousness before God. For example, Abraham was a regenerated man who loved and obeyed God. But how was Abraham righteous before God? Not by any of Abraham's works or love but by faith only.

What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. (Rom. 4:1-3)

Our commenter is mistaken when he brings regeneration into justification as the reason for a man's justification. The issue in justification is not that God makes a spiritually dead man alive so that the man works. The issue in justification is God's declaration that an ungodly sinner is righteous without any of that man's works. "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Gal. 2:21). But "knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (v. 16).

YouTube Answer

In light of the above, the following answer to our commenter will be posted on the YouTube page, with a link to this article.

The Reformed faith does not deny God's wonderful and gracious work of regeneration in his people. Nor does the Reformed faith deny the effects of that regeneration in a life of good works of gratitude according to God's law. Rather, the Reformed faith denies that the new life of Christ in God's people or the good works that proceed from that new life are any part whatsoever of our righteousness before God. Rather, the believer's righteousness before God is entirely and exclusively the good works that Jesus Christ has done in the believer's place and the atonement for sin that Jesus Christ offered to God in the believer's place. That is, the believer's righteousness before God is not an internal, intrinsic, or infused righteousness in any sense, according to which the believer obeys God's holy and good law. Rather, the believer's righteousness before God is only the external and perfect righteousness of another, Jesus Christ, which God imputes, counts, and reckons to the believer and which the believer receives by faith alone.

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. (Gal. 2:16)

Prayer

Our commenter's comment regarding justification reveals something about him. First, it reveals that he has a certain zeal. Though he disagrees with the Reformed faith, he listens to Reformed sermons on YouTube and comments. That is some zeal. Second, his comment reveals that he is one of those many in the church who go about to establish their own righteousness before God. But those

who have their own internal righteousness before God have no righteousness at all.

May the Lord have mercy on our commenter and on us, according to his good pleasure, and may he save his own by the blessed gospel of justification by faith alone.

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which

doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (Rom. 10:1–10)

—AL

HERMAN HOEKSEMA'S *BANNER* ARTICLES

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Our Doctrine by Rev. H. Hoeksema

Article CLIV: The New King and His Kingdom: In the Fulness of Time

“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.”—Gal. 4:4

The Word of God tells us that Christ came in the fulness of the time.

In Gal. 4:4 the Apostle Paul uses this expression in reflecting upon the previous period of the old dispensation. The heir as long as he is a child differs in nothing from a servant, even though he is heir of all things. So in the old dispensation the people of God were held under bondage, under tutors and governors until the time appointed by the Father. “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.”

And in Eph. 1:10 the same apostle writes with a somewhat broader significance of the expression:

“That in the dispensation of the fulness of time he might gather together all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth.” As is plain from the context of this verse, the apostle employs the phrase “fulness of times” in a more comprehensive sense here than in Gal. 4:4. But even so the idea that Christ came in the fulness of time, and that the dispensation of the fulness of times came with Christ's first advent, is implied.

Christ, then, did not come into this world at any moment arbitrarily conceived and chosen, but he was sent at a certain particular moment of time, in a definite, determined period of history. And that particular moment of history is called “the fulness of time.”

Before we enter upon the discussion of the King of the new Kingdom, the Mediator and Head of the covenant of grace, we wish to inquire what

exactly is meant by “the fulness of time.” What does the expression “fulness of time” signify? What is the meaning of the phrase as such in the Word of God? And what is peculiar of the period or moment of history thus designated?

There is a modern, evolutionary, and at the same time thoroughly Pelagian, interpretation of this expression, which we may discard from the outset. This view is quite fully expressed by F. Rendall on Gal. 4:4. He writes: “When God saw that the world was ripe for the advent, He sent forth his Son. Until generations of mankind had learned through years of social training to control some of the animal instincts of their lower nature, to rebel against its brutal passions, and cherish a desire to live in obedience to their higher nature, until they had developed some sense of sin and some craving after holiness beyond their reach, they were not ready to welcome a Redeemer” (Rendall on Gal. 4:4 in “Expositor’s Greek Testament”). Such an interpretation of the expression “fulness of time” is not only against all the Word of God teaches and militates against all the plain facts of history, but by its flat Pelagianism it deprives the phrase of its true strength and beauty. For, in the first place, it pictures God as a passive looker-on with regard to the development of the world, particularly with respect to the generations of mankind. History developed. Mankind in its generations became ripe. And God watched its development under the influence of some social training. And when he saw that the world was ripe for the advent, he sent forth his Son. Such a view takes the very heart out of the expression “fulness of time.” For whatever may be the meaning of the phrase, we surely may, in the light of the Word of God, establish at once that it designates a moment God himself had afore appointed in his eternal counsel, and in history had also himself prepared. God is not a passive looker-on with regard to the history of the world, watching till the right moment may come for him to act. On the contrary, he stands above all history, perfectly controlling and conducting every line and phase of it, and causing all things to work together to his determined end. And thus it is also

with the coming of his Son. It is not thus that history became ripe for that advent and God simply chose the right moment for the sending of his Son. But it is undoubtedly thus, that God had the coming of his Son in view all through the history of the old dispensation, and that unto that coming he prepared all things. The question we must ask in this connection, therefore, is not: How had the world prepared itself for the advent of Christ? but: How had God prepared all things in the world for that coming in “the fulness of time”? In the second place, the author of the above paragraph proceeds from the assumption that the world had developed ethically and that along the line of evolution. In the early stages of history the generations of mankind were decidedly bad morally and socially. The animal instincts of their lower nature they allowed to reign supremely. Their brutal passions had full sway. They also possessed a higher and better nature. But this higher and ethically better nature had not developed sufficiently. It had not learned as yet to rebel against their brutal passions, and they had no craving after holiness. Hence, in that early stage of history, Christ, who evidently came to teach them the highest principles of ethics and sociology, would have had no place in the world. The world would not have welcomed him at that period. But “the fulness of time” signifies that generations of mankind had learned to know and practice the higher life. They had developed. And they had reached a stage in which they were fighting against their animal passions and lower, brutal instincts. They were craving after holiness. And Christ came to place that holiness they craved, but to which they could not attain, within their reach. They welcomed, they were ready to welcome, a Redeemer.

Now, this entire view is so flatly in contradiction with all that Scripture teaches in this respect, and, at the same time, with all the actual facts of history itself, that we would be inclined to say: This is exactly what “the fulness of time” does not mean and can never mean. It ignores the fact of sin and its organic development in the world among the generations of mankind. According to Paul’s inspired conception as set forth in Rom. 1, the development

had been in a direction exactly the opposite of that indicated by Rendall as quoted above. It had not been a development from lower to higher, but from bad to worse. In the midst of the light of God's revelation in nature, and knowing God in that natural light, they had, nevertheless, represented him under the image of man and beast and creeping thing. And instead of gradually developing a craving for holiness, they had degraded themselves morally till they literally wallowed in the mire of uncleanness. Thus it was in the heathen world, particularly in that part of the heathen world where natural light was strongest and where civilization had reached its most wonderful height of development. It was not among the less gifted nations, where social training had been almost entirely wanting, that moral life was lowest and animal instincts had freest sway. But it was in the world of civilization, among the Greeks and Romans, that you must look for the condition. Thus it was in the heathen world "in the fulness of time." And if we turn our attention from the heathen world at large to Israel as a nation, we meet with the same phenomenon. Also Israel as a nation had known better days than those of "the fulness of times." It surely is not true that the fulness of time is also the most glorious period of Israel's history, no matter from what aspect you may conceive of it. Much rather would we expect that Christ would have come in the time of David or Solomon if the nation as such must be ethically and religiously and socially prepared. It is one of the darkest moments in the history of God's people; it is the moment that Israel well nigh succumbs under the bondage of the law that is indicated by the expression "fulness of time."

And lastly, such an interpretation of the fulness of time does not fit the facts of history. How, if the fulness of time was the moment the world was most disposed to welcome a Redeemer, could we possibly explain the fact that this world does not welcome him after all, but rejects him and nails him to the accursed tree? Neither the justice of the Romans, nor the wisdom of the Greeks, nor the righteousness of the Jews had a place for this Redeemer when he did come. The darkness comprehended not the Light when he came into the world, and his own received him not. And therefore this entire conception we will discard from the outset. We must look for the interpretation of this phrase in a radically different direction.

Two questions naturally suggest themselves as we attempt to determine the meaning of this expression.

First of all, what is the meaning of the expression as such in the light of Scripture? It is, as we will be able to recognize immediately, a peculiar expression. "Fulness of time." What does it mean?

And secondly, what historical conditions are peculiar to the period indicated by the expression? If we view all things as prepared by the Almighty and according to his eternal counsel; if we confess that God had prepared all things in the world in such a way that they fully befitted the advent of his Son into that world, we are prepared to ask the question: What conditions were they, and how did they stand related to Christ's mission?

To these questions we will attempt to find an answer.

—Grand Rapids, Mich.

