



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 the LORD said unto Moses, Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum; these sweet spices with pure frankincense: of each shall there be a like weight: and thou shalt make it a perfume, a confection after the art of the apothecary, tempered together, pure and holy: and thou shalt beat some of it very small, and put of it before the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with thee: it shall be unto you most holy. And as for the perfume which thou shalt make, ye shall not make to yourselves according to the composition thereof: it shall be unto thee holy for the LORD. Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people.

—Exodus 30:34–38

The Sweet Incense

The sweet incense must have seemed wonderful to God’s sinful people in the wilderness. For the sweet incense was the gospel concerning prayer. By the sweet incense God taught his sinful people that he graciously accepted their prayers. Even more, by the sweet incense God taught his people that their prayers were sweet to him. What good news for the church in the wilderness then and now—weak and sinful and not knowing how to pray. For the sake of the blood of atonement, God delights in the prayers of his people. Let us consider the sweet incense and be glad.

God gave Moses the exact recipe for the composition of the incense. Sweet-smelling spices—stacte, onycha, galbanum, and frankincense—were to be blended together and crushed into small flakes or powder. The spices were costly and fit for a king. The wise men from the East would bring frankincense to Jesus at his birth many years later (Matt. 2:11). The recipe of the sweet incense was “holy for the LORD” (Ex. 30:37). It may not be reproduced by any Israelite for his private use but was consecrated only for use in the service of God.

The priests were to carry the incense into the tabernacle and burn it on the altar of incense. The sweet smoke from the sweet incense would perfume God’s house with a most pleasant aroma.

God, whose throne was just behind the veil from the altar of incense, would smell the sweet smoke as it drifted into the holy of holies. And smelling the sweet savor, God would be well pleased.

The sweet incense and its smoke represented the prayers of God’s people. “Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense” (Ps. 141:2). “And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense” (Luke 1:10). “And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints” (Rev. 5:8). “And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand” (8:3–4).

The fact that the incense was sweet testified that God is pleased with his people’s prayers. What a wonderful thing! God is pleased with his people’s prayers! But how can the holy God be pleased with our prayers? We are such sinners. Our prayers are not lovely but full of halting and stumbling. “We know not what we should pray for as we ought” (Rom. 8:26). Even the disciples

of Jesus, hearing him pray so purely and perfectly, realized that they did not know the first thing about prayer and needed to be taught. “And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples” (Luke 11:1). How can the holy God even hear, much less be pleased with, the prayers of sinners such as us?

Ah, it is the gospel of prayer. The prayers of God’s people are sweet to God because he cleanses them and sanctifies them in the blood of Jesus Christ. For the sweet incense of the tabernacle was burned on coals taken from the altar of burnt offering (Lev. 16:12). And the altar of incense was sanctified every year by the application of blood (Ex. 30:10). And the one who offered the prayers of God’s people was the great high priest of the

people (vv. 7–8). For Jesus’ sake God hears our prayers, is pleased with them, and answers them.

Behold the gospel of the sweet incense. Let us be glad in Christ. And let us come boldly unto the throne of grace.

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. (Heb. 4:14–16)

—AL

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Thank you for your Reformed Pavilion Magazine issue on intrinsically righteous and latest issue.

I would like to suggest on the topic of final or future justification in Reformed Pavilion Magazine. May your side be able to share your RRC [Remnant Reformed Church] view on this subject.

Recently one minister had taught or preached this final or future justification. That minister told me that I can find this final justification in any reformed dogmatics. He also shared with me that late Rev Herman Hoeksema mentioned it.

I came to know that last time in reformed circle there had debated on this subject of final justification controversy. If any one can help to share or write in this reformed pavilion magazine in the light of scripture to help us to understand according to God’s word. The doctrine of justification is very important to the church as well as the gospel.

I will be very much appreciated of it.

Thanks and God bless.

For God’s truth

Daniel Teo

Singapore

Reply

A warm welcome to our correspondent. It is good to know that *Reformed Pavilion* finds its way to readers in Singapore. All our readers are hereby invited to write in as you have opportunity and inclination.

And speaking of Singapore, let me take this opportunity to inform any readers who are new to *Reformed Pavilion* that God has been pleased to gather a small fellowship of Reformed believers in Singapore who meet every Sunday morning

for worship and instruction. Public lectures on the doctrine of God’s covenant are also being planned in Singapore in 2026 on June 20 and 27. If anyone from our readership lives in Singapore or ever finds himself passing through Singapore, you are cordially invited to contact the fellowship at sgchristian137@gmail.com or WhatsApp 89604637. And for all our readers, wherever you are in the world, you are cordially invited to join the Singapore fellowship service via Zoom on Sundays at UTC 0100 (9:00 a.m. Singapore time). The Zoom link is available at <https://www.remnantreformedchurch.org/pages/singapore-fellowship>.

Our correspondent requests instruction on the topic of final justification. The term *final justification* refers to God’s public declaration at the final judgment that his elect people are righteous in Christ and thus are worthy (for Jesus’ sake) of eternal life with God in the new heavens and earth. As our correspondent indicates, final justification is a very important topic for the believer because “the doctrine of justification is very important to the church as well as the gospel.” Final justification is the good news of the gospel for poor sinners in this life, who suffer persecution for the cause of Christ. The glad tidings of final justification are that God shall publicly declare to all men about me what he now causes me to know in my own heart by faith: “I am righteous in Christ, before God, and an heir of eternal life” (Lord’s Day 23, Q&A 59). The final justification of God’s people will be our public vindication before all men. Then all men shall know that they persecuted the righteous, for we are righteous in Christ. Then God will reveal his judgment that our cause, which men rejected and ridiculed in their judgments, was the cause of Christ and the cause of the gospel. Our final justification—or final vindication—is part of the hope of the child of God in this life, causing him to look forward with longing for the great day of Christ and the great day of judgment.

But the topic of final justification is controversial. False teachers take the truth of final justification in Christ and turn it into the bondage of a meritorious final justification by works. Instead of the believer’s glad anticipation of the day when all men shall hear that his cause was the righteous cause of Christ, the child of God is filled with trepidation over whether he will have done enough good works to stand in the final judgment. The gospel is turned into the law. Grace is turned into merit. Joy is turned into fear. And the error is widespread. It is official dogma in the Roman Catholic Church, to no one’s surprise. But the error also appears in those men and those places that have a name for being Reformed. The error is embedded deep in the depraved flesh of the child of God, which flesh dulls the senses of the child of God to the wretchedness of final justification by works and which makes the senses of the child of God indifferent to the glory of final justification in Christ alone.

The topic of final justification is also far-reaching. It includes the return of Jesus Christ on the clouds of glory as judge. It includes the reward of eternal life that God will graciously give to all his people in Christ. It includes the final state of all men—hell for the reprobate and heaven for the elect. It includes the nature of Christ’s kingdom as the spiritual kingdom of amillennialism and not the earthly kingdom of both premillennialism and postmillennialism. And it includes many more topics besides.

Because of all the above, the topic of final justification is worthy of a more extended investigation than has been given here in this brief answer to a letter. In upcoming issues of *Reformed Pavilion*, Lord willing, let us turn our attention to the grand topic of the glorious return of Christ and the final judgment. And may our heavenly Father bless “the consideration of this judgment,” that it may be “most desirable and comfortable to the righteous and the elect” (Belgic Confession 37).

—AL



Article CLVIII: The New King and His Kingdom: The Fulness of Time (continued)

“I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid. But rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.” —Rom. 11:11

We saw that politically the scepter had practically departed from Judah, even to the extent that the highest Jewish council possessed no more the right to express and execute a capital sentence, and the Roman foreigner, keeping watch in Jerusalem in the fortress of Antonia, kept in custody the high priest's garments, so that the priest, before he could officiate in the temple, had to apply for them to the governor or his representative. The outward form of the old dispensational kingdom had well-nigh disappeared to make room for the new King and his kingdom that were about to be inaugurated. In this respect the middle wall of partition was strong no more, except in the abstract world of the rabbis and leaders of the people, who lived in the past and viewed the present in its light only.

But no different it was at the time of our Lord's advent in the Holy Land from any other aspect. He that had eyes to see might know that all things pointed to a speedy collapse of that middle wall of partition.

In the first place we must bear in mind that the people that inhabited the Holy Land at the time of Christ's sojourn were of very many different nationalities, races, and tribes. The popular mind often imagines that in the fulness of time the land was still exclusively or chiefly, apart from the Roman guards, inhabited by one people, Israel. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The very contrary is true. For not only would one meet with the Roman power everywhere, but there were also foreign settlers in considerable number from different nations. There were Greeks and Arabs,

Syrians and Phoenicians, and wild, nomadic races in the Holy Land, and these brought with them their own languages, customs, religion, and institutions, and lived their own lives to a considerable extent. Neither need this cause surprise. The people that returned from the land of Israel's captivity were comparatively few and surely could not occupy the entire country. We know that already in the period of the captivity foreigners had settled in the land. And in the dark and troublesome period that followed the captivity, there was an almost continual influx of strangers of every description, and repeated attempts were made to establish in the Holy Land heathen customs and heathen religions. And thus it might be expected that at the time of the Lord's coming we would find a mixed population inhabiting the country. And thus it was, indeed. If we take for granted that the rabbinical description of the borders of the Holy Land is correct, the city of Antioch lay just outside its northern boundary. We find, then, that the northernmost territory of Canaan was chiefly inhabited by Gentiles. It is there, in the borders of Tyre and Sidon, that we find the Lord with his disciples when he withdraws from the hostile Pharisees, and it is there that he heals the daughter of the Syro-Phoenician woman. In the northeast, the territory over which Philip ruled as tetrarch, wild, nomadic tribes had settled and lived according to their own customs in tremendous caves. In the center of the land, as we well know, lived the Samaritans, also a mixed race, whose relation of hatred to the Jews has become proverbial. The district known as Decapolis, the territory of the ten cities, also was almost exclusively heathen; in fact, it was a heathen federation with a government of its own. And even upper Galilee, Galilee

of the Gentiles, was chiefly populated by foreign nationalities, Greeks, Arabs, Syrians, Phoenicians.

Considering, then, the many races and peoples that met and mingled on the soil of the Holy Land in the fulness of time, we would naturally expect that the land by no means presents a homogeneous aspect from a religious point of view. Neither are we mistaken in this expectation. Surely, Jerusalem and Judea still were the stronghold of the tradition of the fathers. There also Israel still lived under the law more than in any other part of the country. In the Holy City still stood the temple, large and magnificent, even though a stone occupied the place where stood formerly the ark of the covenant. Thither still flocked Jew and proselyte on the holy days. But throughout the country there were also many foreign temples where foreign gods were worshipped. In the north one would find the worship of the Syrian gods; Decapolis was Grecian in its worship; in Samaria, or Sebaste, as it had been renamed, Herod had built a temple to Caesar Augustus; Caesarea, on the sea coast, could boast of another temple to the Roman emperor; and in Jerusalem itself Herod had built a magnificent theater and amphitheater, where the Roman gladiators met in bloody combat and heathen games were held.

In short, everywhere in the land, at the time of Christ, one met that which reminded of the foreigner. Foreign customs, foreign temples and theaters, foreign nationalities and tribes, foreign money and foreign taxes, foreign articles of every description abounded everywhere. Though Aramaic was still the language of Israel, the Greek language was very popular. Roads stretched through the country in every direction, and from the land far into the outside world. The land of Israel had obtained a cosmological aspect. In Canaan was the world; in Jerusalem all the world met. There was the civilization of the Greeks, the power and jurisprudence of the Romans, the trade and commerce of all the world. And there was also still, what was in no other country, the covenant people, the worship of Jehovah, the expectation of the Messiah.

As to this expectation of the Anointed One of Israel, we will be obliged to distinguish between different elements in Israel. In the first place there was also at this time the faithful remnant that always remained in Israel. They were the ones that fervently hoped for and anxiously looked forward to the fulfillment of prophecy, to the dawning of the Messianic day. They longed for the coming of Israel's King. In the midst of much ruin and dilapidation, of much suffering and oppression; in a time when Israel's national sun had well-nigh sunken below the horizon, when the glory had departed from the covenant people, this faithful remnant patiently, though with intense longing, watched for the coming of the Lion of Judah's tribe. No, even these could not very well have the proper conception of the Anointed and the kingdom he came to establish. Even in this period of national, political, and religious degradation they still conceived of the bright future that was sure to come under the aspect of Israel's national existence and glory. For even a John the Baptist, who had been in such intimate contact with him when he first appeared, who even had obtained a special sign from heaven that Jesus was the long expected one, even he seems lost when he hears in prison about Jesus' work, and deems it necessary to send disciples of his to the Savior with the question: "Art Thou he, or must we still look for another?" But although their conception of the Messiah was naturally formed after the shadows of the old dispensation, in faith they looked forward, and they would prove ready to accept him and become his people when he appeared. And as outward circumstances grew more hopeless, their longing became more intense that he might come who would redeem Israel.

But there was another and very large element among Israel quite distinct from this faithful remnant. In common with the latter, these also were enthused about Messiah's coming. Fervently they longed for him. Zealously they were prepared to follow him. So strong was their hope, so ardent their enthusiasm, so real their zeal, that more than once they followed an impostor or fanatic, who claimed to be the Messiah, to a cruel death at

the hands of the Romans. A Theudas was able to persuade a multitude of these zealots to follow him to the brink of the Jordan to see him divide its waters as in Joshua's time and then to follow him to victory against the Romans. An Egyptian impostor could make them believe that the walls of Jerusalem would presently fall down at his command. Filled with zeal they were, therefore, and with a strong hope for the coming of the Messiah. But an earthly king they desired and no other. A Messiah they must have that could re-establish the earthly kingdom and the literal throne of David and restore to Israel its former glory. And for that reason the real Messiah could not but bitterly disappoint them. They were the masses that followed him for the bread that perisheth. They could be enthused one day and prepare to press an earthly crown upon his brow, then to hail him as Zion's deliverer, but the next day these same zealots could turn away in disgust when he assured them that only in the way of suffering and death could he establish his kingdom. They were the multitude that could see in him the Prophet that was to come, but immediately after would be ready to crucify him.

As to the leaders in Israel, the rabbis, the scribes and Pharisees, these constituted, with respect to the coming of the Messiah and its expectation in Israel, a class all by itself. Enthusiasts they were not, except for the law and tradition. They had their back turned toward the future of Israel, and they faced the past. They might speculate about the coming of Christ as a point of interpretation in prophecy, but they did not look forward to his coming. They concerned themselves with the law and the establishment of legal determinations. They lived in a world of Judaistic abstractions and Pharisaistic self-righteousness. Though all about them pointed to the collapse in the near future of the middle wall of partition, yea, even long after it had been cast down, they refused to look

forward to the bright future of the Messianic age and preferred to live in a world of their own, looking down with disdain upon the accursed masses that knew not the law.

But thus developed exactly those circumstances that were necessary for the realization of Christ's calling. While the faithful remnant would accept him, Israel as a nation would reject and crucify him, that through their fall salvation might come unto the Gentiles. And as to this Gentile world? Also in its midst the Lord had operated preparatory to the coming of him who is a propitiation for all the world. In almost every respect the world of that time presented a unified appearance. Politically the world was one as it never had been before, even though the sun of Roman glory was already hastening to its setting. Roads, as means of communication, stretched through all the world. The Greek language was spoken everywhere. On the other hand, the wisdom of the world had proven itself unable to save, and morally the world was near bankruptcy. Surely, it was the fulness of time. The Son of God could enter into human nature at its very center. Presently he would judge the "world" while apparently it judged him. And being exalted at the right hand of the Father, he would enter as a quickening Spirit into all nations and tongues and tribes, having cast down the tottering middle wall of partition. And while he entered with his Spirit into a world wallowing in iniquity, the messengers of good tidings could speed along the roads of the world, and from Jerusalem and Judea, through Samaria and to the uttermost boundaries of the earth as it was then known, they could, on the wings of one of the richest languages the world ever knew, spread the gospel of the Crucified One that was raised from the dead and of salvation to all in his blood!

—Grand Rapids, Mich.

