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INTERNAL LAW

GOVERNMENT UPON HIS SHOULDERS

A chapter from

Sweet Counsel: Essays to Brighten the Eyes

mATURATION IS THE PROCESS OF MAKING GOD’S “external law” into our internal law, as our operating, animating principle. This has huge implications for sanctification, but it also explains a lot of what is going on in the Bible’s symbolism and architecture.

The test in Eden was not two dimensional. The deceit by Satan was not allowed by God simply to demonstrate whether Adam was “in” or “out.” The question was not, “Are you on my side or not?” As Douglas Wilson says, when he was sent by his father to the cellar for misbehavior, it was not because he wasn’t a Wilson. It was because he *was* a Wilson. A father disciplines his child out of love, with one eye on the future. All of God’s judgments are “visionary justice.” This is where the process of atonement comes in. It cuts off the past and frees the future.

What is the third dimension of testing? Enlargement. Heaven was created “solid state,” but every part of the

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earth was designed to grow to maturity. If Adam had obeyed, it would not mean he had earned greater authority but that he had grown, been enlarged, to shoulder such government. We see the same process in the lives of all of the patriarchs, especially Joseph. Continued faithfulness, despite betrayal and hardship, meant that wisdom developed and he could be exalted in one fell swoop to rule the world—and call his brothers to the table.

The difference between Man and the rest of creation is self-awareness. Under heaven's eye, the human is both the observed *and* the observer. Man, unlike animals, requires not only a diet of food but also a steady diet of truth. Spiritual growth begins with hearing the truth, and hearing presumes a relationship. This is where faith comes in. Faith is *relational*, resulting in works carried out in response to the speaker of truth. Much of the discussion concerning “faith and works” fails to consider growth and relationship as parts of the equation.

True works are not meritorious, but are the evidence of faith, even in the life of Jesus. James Jordan writes:

The problem with the “covenant of works” notion lies in the fact that it is linked up with merit theology. There is no merit theology in the Bible. Merit theology is a hangover of medieval Roman Catholicism.

The problem with much “active and passive” talk is that it is part of the same erroneous scheme: Jesus’ “active obedience” earned merits that are then given to me, merits that Adam was supposed to earn. Such “merits” are some kind of “works,” and though this is not said, what is implied are something like Herculean

labors, something beyond merely remaining faithful.

But that's not what happened. Jesus simply remained faithful. He did not do any heroic works — there is no heroism in the gospel anywhere; only faithfulness. In a large sense, all of Jesus' "work" was "passive." He did not "go beyond" mere faithful obedience to the Law. But as a result of doing just that and no more, He matured into full adulthood. Notice that He was proclaimed king when He arrived at Jerusalem, was tried as a king, was robed as a king, and was crucified as a king. Contrary to Presbyterian theology, Jesus did not die primarily as a priest but as Melchizedek, as a king. That is, as an adult.

Or, better, as the One who was on the brink of becoming king, as the anointed Prince. Passing through death on the tree and then being resurrected in a transfigured state, Jesus became fully King and Adult.

Jesus resisted Satan in the wilderness. That's what Adam failed to do. From that point on, for three plus years, He matured in faith, beyond the point where Adam failed. He matured to the point of being ready for adult responsibilities. Through His death, He became fully mature and was given dominion over *all* nations, over the wider world into which Adam had been prematurely cast.

That is the point of Galatians 3-4. Formerly we were children, but now in union with Jesus Christ we have become adults. What we have received from Jesus is not a collection of "merits," but rather His maturity.¹

1 James B. Jordan, quoted in an online discussion. For detailed discussion see James B. Jordan, "Merit Versus Maturity: What Did Jesus Do For Us?" in *The Federal Vision*, eds. Steve Wilkins and Duane Gardner.

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So, faithful works are not meritorious, but neither are unfaithful works. The difference between the good works of a Christian and the good works of a Muslim is *true relationship with God*. Works without faith are not relational. Without faith it is impossible to please God. A son who despises his father does his chores merely for his own benefit will be disowned. In essence, God gave Adam one law. Adam whined and asked “Why?” And God said, “Because I am your father.” It was not a test of obedience but a test of relationship. Law and love are not the same, but they cannot be separated. Internal law is not only “loving the standard” as something that brings life, but growing through a perception of the goodness of the law, and beyond it, to a love for the Lawgiver and an expression of that love to others.

External law is Man under government, under the sword. But internal law is not merely Man *in* government, bearing the sword as a wise ruler. It is man “with God.” Maturity is an increase in authority due to a growth in relationship. This is because God cannot be separated from either His attributes or His gifts.

To have a God-given internal moral compass is to have God Himself. To have internal law is to have Christ Himself in you. Law and love were designed to be married, to be dance partners. Like male and female, neither makes sense without the other. To love God’s law is to love God Himself.

So, righteousness is impossible without faith because true humanity is life lived in relation to God. The right-

eousness of the Pharisees was not righteousness but a power grab. It was law operating without love, which is vengeance and not mercy, the religion of Cain, Lamech and the Herods. Rather than being the image and bearer of *God's* standard, Man makes *himself* into the Lawgiver, the ultimate source of authority. But Man's law is only two dimensional. Bereft of love, human rulers are only concerned with compliance, not growth. Unfeigned love for a ruler is rare. Human rulers have subjects, not sons.

But Jesus did not atone for our sins merely to right a wrong. Destroying us would accomplish that. He was sent to us by the Father to reconcile us to Him. Jesus told the Pharisees who their real father was: the devil, the one who, beginning in Eden, used the good Law as an instrument of death. Satan's "sons" abused the Law in this way in the account of the woman caught in adultery.

Jesus' story of the Pharisee and the tax collector is not about pride, but about pride as a hindrance to reconciliation. The unfaithful "*righteousness*" of the Pharisee blinded him to the truth. The "faithful" *unrighteousness* of the tax collector allowed God to open his eyes. The difference was true relationship. The tax collector loved God, and like Joseph, realized that sin was primarily a personal offense against one's Creator (Genesis 39:9). Faith leads to obedience, which leads to understanding. Promise leads to fulfillment. Thus, faith (promise) leads to sight (fulfillment). This means that growing in godliness is a growth in *vision*. Spiritual growth is first and foremost a developing "judicial maturity," and this is achieved through

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obedience to the truth. As we obey, more and more we see evil for what it is (especially in ourselves) and it repels us.

The Lord's table is a public demonstration of this. We examine our hearts and die under the Law. We "confess" our sins legally before God because *we see them as they are*, with eyes opened by that Law. But with those eyes *we also see Jesus as He is*, and "confess" Him as our legal advocate. We leave the assembly reconciled, resurrected, with the gift of eternal life in the Spirit.

We do see this exact pattern of Law and Spirit, forming and filling, all through the Bible. It is the heart of the "Bible Matrix."² Obedience brings greater authority, and disobedience means we lose even what we have—because we can't be trusted with it as stewards.

For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. (Matthew 25:29)

This process also reveals the heart of God. The Law gives form to life but its intended end is always relational, that is, fellowship, a blessed unity of mind, with the resulting kindred spirit. Communion is the result of reconciliation, thus only possible through repentance and faith.

Jesus' obedience gave us the Spirit, and all of the riches of His "judicially mature" Adamic mind. The "glorious future" is when we are "gods," that is, *elohim*, judges, perfect physical images and perfect ethical (legal) repre-

2 This is discussed at length in *Bible Matrix II: The Covenant Key*.

sentatives of the Father. Every Covenant is an opportunity to image God in the world as creator, protector and provider. Every Covenant is an opportunity not only to demonstrate, but to become “the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21), extensions of His mind and character in the way Moses’ helpers extended his judicial ministry.

The way in which we “judge” (assess) sin has a direct bearing on the preciousness of Christ to us. As we grow, we judge Him to be more and more righteous, and this transforms us into His image. The Spirit opens our eyes to behold Him in His beauty, both the beauty of His Law and the beauty of His grace, and this changes us. Like Adam, our eyes are opened, and we are clothed, covered.

As our spiritual (obedient) life progresses, so does the opening of our eyes. The light of the Spirit becomes not something descending upon us but emanating from within us. God makes us into Tabernacles.

This is what we see at Jesus’ Transfiguration. Though the cloud was present, the three tabernacles proposed by Peter were not required. Jesus needed no tent because He *was* now the Tent. The Shekinah within the tent and Temple was always a gift from God once His instructions had been obeyed. Robert Ervin Hough gives us a beautiful description of this process:

Christ has two glories. There is the glory which He had with the Father before the foundation of the world (John 17:5), which is His inherent glory, a glory which cannot be added to nor taken from. As the Redeemer of mankind He has an acquired glory, the glory which

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belongs to Him as the Saviour. As the Son of God He came in the glory of the Father, but as the Son of man He will come in His own glory in which His own people will share (John 17:22). The Transfiguration was the foreshadowing of His acquired glory, the glory which the three disciples were permitted to see on the mount.

There were a number of occurrences in connection with the Transfiguration which did much to prepare the disciples to understand and appreciate the Divine purpose in the tragic events of the closing period of the Savior's life in the flesh.

First, there was the Transfiguration. It was an undeniable confirmation of the pronouncement of Peter concerning the person of Christ and the pledge of His final and complete victory. In the mount all the prophetic words concerning the Messiah were made surer to human understanding. The Transfiguration involved a radical change in the physical appearance of Christ. It was not a transformation wrought from without but a change which originated from within. It may be considered in some respects the counterpart of the incarnation. In the incarnation His Deity was veiled in flesh (Phil. 2:5-8), while at the Transfiguration the veil of the flesh became transparent so that His true character and dignity might be observed for a brief period.

At the Transfiguration Christ reached the climax of His human life. He had failed in nothing, for He had met every temptation and defeated every tempter in every encounter. Having fulfilled every demand of the Father's will there was no need for Him to die personally. He might have returned to heaven with Moses and

Elijah, to take His place with the Father from when He had come.³

The legal testimony of two witnesses, Moses (external law – elements [*stoicheia*] hidden in the earth) and Elijah (internal law – hidden in heaven), corroborated in the court of the Father, and Jesus was vindicated as God-Man. Moses and Elijah were then put into Jesus to be taken into the grave and fulfilled. Many believe they were the two men testifying at the ascension. In Jesus, they were united as a new law, the Law of Christ, which was conferred *upon* the saints in the gift of the Spirit, and revealed *in* them through faithful obedience as glory. Internal law is the gift of the seer, the presence of the One from whose eyes nothing in heaven or on earth is hidden.

“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets.” (Romans 3:21)

3 Robert Ervin Hough, *The Ministry of the Glory Cloud*, 83-84.