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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 a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD. And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD.

—Exodus 28:36–38 (See also 39:30–31.)

The Holy Crown

The outermost holy garment upon the head of the high priest was the holy crown. It was made of pure gold and was in the form of a plate. That is, it was not a circlet of gold that sat upon the high priest's head like a king's crown. Rather, it was a plate or strip of gold that was attached to blue lace that served as a tie to fasten the holy crown firmly upon the high priest's mitre, or turban, on his forehead. The crown would be prominent and visible to God's people.

Upon the holy crown was engraved the inscription HOLINESS TO JEHOVAH. This was the only place in the high priest's garments where the name of God appeared. The names of the children of Israel were engraved in two places: the onyx stones on the high priest's shoulders and the precious stones upon his breastplate. Now, here on the holy crown, the name of Jehovah appeared. And what a glorious place for Jehovah's name! On the uppermost garment, secured upon the high priest's forehead, so that when his face was turned to you, you would read very prominently, "HOLINESS TO JEHOVAH"!

The significance of the holy crown, first of all, was that the high priest himself was holiness to Jehovah. That is, the high priest was set apart and consecrated to the service of Jehovah. Our Lord Jesus Christ fulfills this garment, for he is our "high priest...who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Heb. 7:26).

The main significance of the holy crown was that the people's offerings and worship were holy through the high priest and through the high priest alone. God explained the holy crown thus: "And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD" (Ex. 28:38). When God mentioned the people's "holy things" and their "holy gifts," "which the children of Israel shall hallow," he was referring to all their offerings that they would bring to the tabernacle in their public worship of Jehovah. By their offerings the children of Israel demonstrated their love for God and their gratitude to him. They made their offerings in obedience to God's law and in reverence to Jehovah and worship of him. And yet God speaks of "the iniquity of the holy things." The children of Israel were sinners, and their sin tainted even their holy things. Yes, their offerings were good works. Their offerings were true obedience. Their offerings were brought out of regenerated hearts and by the power of the Holy Spirit. And yet their offerings were thoroughly polluted! The children of Israel were sinners. Their natural pollution made their offerings unacceptable to the perfectly holy and perfectly pure Jehovah. Except...except...the high priest was holy! He was a type of the true high priest, Jesus Christ, who is perfectly holy. Jesus Christ

bears the iniquity of our holy things, of our good works, of our thankful worship. He purifies all our gifts of all their filth by his blood, so that, by his grace, they are acceptable to Jehovah. “These works” of ours, done by faith, “are good and acceptable in the sight of God, forasmuch as they are all sanctified by his grace” (Belgic Confession 24). Therefore, the

child of God is free to bring his worship and thanksgiving to God through Jesus Christ, who is HOLINESS TO JEHOVAH and through whom alone they are accepted. “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name” (Heb. 13:15).

—AL

HERMAN HOEKSEMA’S *BANNER* ARTICLES

The Banner

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(p. 6)

Our Doctrine by Rev. H. Hoeksema

Article CXLI: The New King and His Kingdom: The Law as Taskmaster

“Moreover the law entered that the offence might abound.”—Rom. 5:20

We found that when Paul writes in Gal. 3:19 that “the law was added because of transgressions,” this cannot mean that the law served to repress, to check, to keep back the corruption of sin. For, in the first place, Scripture teaches what appears to be the very opposite of this view. Not where the law is transgression disappears, but where the law is not there is no transgression. Transgression comes with the law. In the second place, we found that this cannot be maintained in the light of Israel’s history. The law surely did not actually repress transgression among the chosen nation. Quite the contrary is true. And, lastly, by repressing transgression the law would have led to nothing but Pharisaism, and would have been a poor taskmaster to Christ. As a means to lead the people historically to the Christ that was to come, that is, to the righteousness that is by faith, they must become thoroughly convinced that righteousness by the works of the law is impossible. By repressing offences the law would have accomplished the very opposite.

It is for that reason that others have explained this word of the apostle in such a way that the law

becomes merely the means through which the people came to a consciousness of their sin. And this, of course, is true, as far as it goes. Paul himself writes (Rom. 7:7) that he would have been ignorant of the fact that lust is sin if the law had not said: “Thou shalt not covet.” And in Rom. 3:20 he writes that “by the law is the knowledge of sin.” There is, therefore, no question about the fact that the law was a teacher of sin, and that it served to bring to a consciousness of sinfulness. But the question remains, nevertheless: How did the law serve this purpose? Must we conceive of this teaching of the law mechanically, so that the law speaks and the people listen and thus the latter come to know what is sin? Or, perhaps, must we explain simply that over against the law the people felt their incompetency to fulfill the commandments, and thus came to a consciousness of their depravity? In itself this may be true, but it is not the full explanation of Scripture. If we would understand the teaching of Scripture in this respect, we must see this, that the law brought to a consciousness of sin, of corruption, of depravity, because it served as a means to develop corruption into actual transgression. So far is the conception that the law served to check sin besides the truth, that the very opposite is true.

It did not check transgressions, but served to bring them out. It did not limit the offences, but caused them to abound.

This is the clear teaching of the Word of God. The general truth at the basis of this idea is that a good influence always serves to bring out the corruption of that which is corrupt already. The good rain serves to bring to light and to development the seed of the thorn and thistle otherwise lying dead in the corrupt field. The good air serves to develop the corruption of a corrupt piece of meat. The good law served to bring out the corruption of depraved human nature by exciting to actual transgressions.

This is, first of all, the plain teaching of the Apostle Paul in Rom. 5:20: "Moreover the law entered that the offence might abound." The word employed in this text for "offence" has somewhat the same significance as that used for "transgressions" in Gal. 3:19. Both words refer not to the inherent corruption and depravity of human nature, but to actual misdeeds, definite violations of the law; not to sinfulness, but to actual sins. Paul is arguing in this chapter that sin came into the world by one man and death through sin. The sin of one man is imputed to all (vs. 12). He argues that this imputation of sin, of the sin of Adam, to all is plain from the time before Moses. At that time the law of separate commandments was not yet. But although this is true, and although sin cannot be imputed where there is no law, yet death as the punishment of sin reigned, nevertheless, all through that period, which proves that sin was imputed. Sin was there. But as long as the law of separate precepts was not announced from Horeb, it did not reveal itself as transgression of the law. But the law was added that the offence might abound (vs. 20). That is, human nature was corrupt, also before the law entered. Neither did human nature become essentially more corrupt through the law. But the corruption of human nature under the influence of the good law began to abound in actual transgressions. As soon as the law was announced, proclaiming definite rules of action for various spheres of life, sin

rebelled against all these various commandments and revealed itself in transgressions.

The same truth the apostle develops in Rom. 7. There he writes: "For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death." Here the apostle refers to the time we were still carnally sold under sin. And he writes that the law served as a means to bring sin into motion. Sin began to stir, as it were, under the influence of the law. The sinfulness of our human nature reacted against the law. And that in such a way that it brought forth fruit unto death in actual transgressions. Paul, however, does not want to be misunderstood. The conclusion might easily be drawn that the law, serving to bring out transgressions, itself is evil. And this is not the case. No, the law is good. So he writes (vs. 7): "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." The law, therefore, is good. It even revealed to him that covetousness is sin. But, thus he continues to explain in vs. 8, without the law sin was dead. It does not come into action. It is there, for human nature is corrupt. The seed of all transgression is within him. He is prone to all manner of wickedness. But without the law that sin was dead. Just as in an evil field the seed of thorn and thistle lies dead till the rain comes upon it, so sin was dead till the good law was brought into play upon the power of sin within him. And thus sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought within him all manner of concupiscence. And this the apostle explains still more clearly in vss. 11, 13: "For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore, the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." Surely, the meaning of this passage is perfectly clear. Purposely the apostle here speaks of the commandment rather

than of the law. The word law refers to the whole body of the law as such. The commandment is a separate precept, a definite prescription according to which a thing must be done. Now, the apostle explains that in the commandment sin took occasion, that is, its starting point, its incentive. When the commandment would prescribe a certain mode of action, sin would find in that prescription of the commandment an incentive to do just the opposite. And thus sin revealed itself as violation of the law. The law was good and remained good. But human nature is corrupt. The law, therefore, is not to blame when under its influence, under its holy influence, sin reveals itself in definite offences. On the contrary, sin is to blame. And this becomes all the more evident, because it works death by that which is good, namely, by the law. And thus sin appeared as exceeding sinful.

The prism breaks the ray of light and brings out the fulness of its prismatic colors. Now, surely, the illustration is too beautiful to be applied to the manifestation of sin. But in some such way the law served as the prism through

which the fulness of transgressions became apparent and sin revealed itself as exceeding sinful.

And thus also we can understand the teaching of Scripture in this respect. The law served as taskmaster, as pedagogue to Christ, in that it brought out the sinfulness of sin, and created the condition necessary to cry out for the righteousness which is by faith. It showed that there was no hope, that the people were so hopelessly depraved that under the influence of the holy and just law they became more corrupt still.

Thus, also through the law the fulness of time was prepared and ushered in. When the people have almost succumbed under the law and are well-nigh lost in transgression, God sends his own Son, made of a woman, under the law. He removes the guilt of sin. He fulfills the law. And that not for himself, for personally he was the Son of God, Lord, not servant of the law. But he removes the guilt and fulfills the law, that we might be free and have the righteousness which is not by the works of the law, but by faith.

—Grand Rapids, Mich.



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