

The Places of The Law & The Gospel

by John Bradford (1548)

The following introductory article by John Bradford served as a preface to a larger work entitled, The Places of The Law and of the Gospel, by Petrus Artopeus. Bradford was a fellow of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, and was martyred in 1555. The electronic edition of this preface was scanned and edited by Shane Rosenthal. It is in the public domain and may be freely copied and distributed. Content has been moderately edited. p. 1, par. 1, [LAW]

Whosoever truly understandeth the division of the places of the Law and of the Gospel, gathered out of the holy scriptures, cannot by any man's doctrine be seduced from the truth, or read the scriptures but to edify both himself and others: whereas he that is ignorant of the same cannot, though he were a great doctor of divinity, and could rehearse every text of the bible without book, but both be deceived, and deceive others; as the experience hereof (the more pity) hath taught, nay, seduced the whole world. For how can it be, that such as find no terror of conscience, and see not their just damnation in the law of God, which commandeth things impossible to man's nature and power; how can it be I say, that such should find sweetness in the gospel of Christ? How can the benefit of Christ shew itself to him that needeth it not? What needeth the whole man the physician? "The law," saith St. Paul, "was our schoolmaster unto Christ." But unto such as perceive and feel not the law, how is it a schoolmaster unto Christ? How is the law a schoolmaster unto such as will not learn? How have they learned, which think the law not to be impossible for man to fulfil? Or else, if they had looked on it, which is a spiritual doctrine, with spiritual eyes, would they have stirred any time contentions about the justification of faith? Would they have taught any satisfactions, which man can do, towards God, if they had learned the law? p. 1, par. 2, [LAW]

It appeareth, therefore, by these things, that either the law hath not been their schoolmaster; or else, that they have been negligent, forgetful, or proud and disdainful scholars. For they have not applied free pardon of sins to Christ, as all the world knoweth. But if they were brought to him, they would grant him to be a perfect workman: they would be ashamed to say or think Christ to be but a patcher. Yet it appeareth (though openly in words they will not say so; for that all christian hearts would abhor: it appeareth, I say), that they believe so. p. 1, par. 3, [LAW]

Wherefore, I pray you, say you mass? Is not the mass, as you have taught and as you say it, a sacrifice propitiatory to take away sins, both of the quick and dead? Where is this taught you? Doth this law bring to Christ? Yea, you will say, for we offer there Christ. And St. Paul saith, "Christ offered himself once for all." But, I pray you, look on the nature of the law, which is, by God's teaching and speaking, to open to man the poison of his own heart: the law will not leave man in arrogancy or presumption, but will rather bring him to desperation. The law pulleth man down, and leadeth him into hell's mouth, as it is written, "Thou art he that ledest to hell," &c. The law filleth man full of grief and heaviness; and, if succour come not from heaven, full of blasphemy even against God and his ordinances, as the history of Job, well weighed of a godly wit, will declare. Thus, you see, the law, where she is schoolmaster, bringeth man into all humbleness of mind at the least. p. 2, par. 1, [LAW]

Therefore, ye offerers, (for you say ye offer Christ,) what humbleness of mind is in you (if a man should grant you offered Christ), when you will offer that thing that no angel, no saint, no patriarch, no prophet, no man might or could offer? Are you not good scholars, when you are taught to be humble, yet extol yourselves above angels? I say, none could be found meet in heaven nor in earth to offer that offering, wherewith God's wrath, deserved by our sins, was appeased and extinct, but even he that was of both natures, both God and man, Jesus Christ. He was the sacrificer and the sacrifice: he was the offerer and the lamb slain: slain, I say, for our sins. Alas, that ever such arrogancy should be crept into, mans heart, not only to spoil Christ of his most glorious office but to extol yourselves above angels, and to make yourselves check-mate with Christ! p. 2, par. 2, [LAW]

St. Paul saith, "By one offering he hath made perfect them which are sanctified for ever." How say you to this? Doth not your offering make the offering which Christ made imperfect? For whatsoever is added to a perfection doth imply an imperfection. Take heed, good reader, therefore, if thou be sanctified, purged from thy sins, anointed with the Holy Ghost, and made the child of God, it is done all by that one oblation of Christ's body on the cross, brought in to thee by the faith that thou hast in the same oblation. Or, if that thou be not now sanctified, if ever thou look to be sanctified or saved, it must be only by this work, wrought of CHRIST in his own person. p. 2, par. 3, [LAW]

Hereby it is evident, that these men, for all their great learning (as some of them have had), that yet they did never understand the law of God. For they never found sweetness in the gospel of Christ. Hath there not been great learned men, think you, that, besides this, have taught abstaining from certain kinds of meat, auricular confessions, worshipping of images, creeping to the cross, holy water, holy bread,

pilgrimages, pardons, and I cannot tell what, necessary to salvation? And this verily hath come hereof, that they have not known the law nor the gospel, though they could both preach, and teach, and say all the bible without book. For he that feeleth the law working in his heart, can never be satisfied, but despair, except the gospel and joyful tidings of Christ be brought unto him. p. 2, par. 4, [LAW]

In this book, therefore, thou hast the places of the Law and the Gospel divided, wherein I exhort thee to prove thyself in the law: see, if the texts and sentences of the law do fear thee, make thee dread, yea, tremble and quake at the justice of God: for God himself hath spoken it, and his word must needs be true, "Heaven and earth shall pass, afore one tittle or iota of the law be unperformed." For in whose heart the law worketh no fear, yea, horrible fear of God's wrath, surely they are in an evil case. p. 3, par. 1, [LAW]

Thus it is manifest, the law of God is not feared, so is not God feared, which proveth there is no faith: for how canst thou believe that God will perform his promise to thee, when thou fearest not his truth to perform his word and threat? God is no liar. Deceive not thyself, therefore: but prove whether thou be in faith. For except thou tremble and quake at God's justice in the law, thou hast no faith, but art an hypocrite: for faith is not, where the fear of God is not; and the fear of God is not, where God's law is not believed. Therefore, I say, take to thee the glass of God's law; look therein, and thou shalt see thy just damnation, and God's wrath for sin, which, if thou drest, will drive thee not only to an amendment, but also to a sorrow and hatred of thy wickedness, and even to the brim of despair, out of which nothing can bring thee but the glad tidings of Christ, that is, the gospel: for as God's word doth bind thee, so can nothing but God's word unbind thee; and until thou comest to this point, thou knowest nothing of Christ. Make unto thee a sure foundation; begin at the Law: and if it fear thee, and bring thee to hell's mouth in consideration of thy sin and sinful nature, then come to Christ, come to the gospel: then shalt thou be a good scholar, and praise thy schoolmaster: then shalt thou feel the benefit of Christ; then shalt thou love him, and thy neighbour for his sake. Then will it make thine ears to glow, and thy heart to bleed, to hear or see any thing set in Christ's place. Then shalt thou look for the coming of thy Lord, and weep to hear his name evil spoken of. The which thing he grant for his mercy's sake. Amen. p. 3, par. 2, [LAW]