

The Law and the Gospel

John Colquhoun (1815)

Introduction & first half of chapter 1 (Lesson 1)

John Colquhoun (1748-1827) was a minister in the church of Scotland. He served at St. John's in South Leith for 46 years. The writings of Thomas Boston (1667-1732) had a big impact on him. He published his first book when he was 65 in the year 1813. His books were the product of decades of study and gospel ministry. Here we find a helpful guide to follow as we seek to understand the _____ and the connection of the Law and Gospel revealed in sacred Scripture.

Why did he write this book?

"The immediate design of the following treatise is to promote conviction of sin and misery in the conscience of sinners and true holiness in the hearts and lives of the saints."

The beautiful tree of _____ holiness (true holiness) grows only in the soil of sound doctrine. If this soil is not rich and full of beneficial nutrients then what grows out of it will be weak and unhealthy.

"There can be no evangelical holiness, either of heart or of life, except it proceed from faith working by love, and no true faith either of the law or of the gospel unless the leading distinctions between the one and the other are spiritually discerned."

"To blend or confound them has been a fatal source of error in the Christian church and has embarrassed many believers not a little in their exercise of faith and practice of holiness. Troubled consciences cannot ordinarily be quieted except the doctrine of the gospel is rightly distinguished from that of the law."

Q. Is this really that big of a deal? Does one really need to properly know these things?

A. _____, if you do not you will not really be able to understand the complete message of the Bible (_____ will be messed up)

"The law and gospel are the principal parts of divine revelation, or rather they are the center, sum, and substance of all the other parts of it. Every passage of sacred Scripture is either law or gospel or is capable of being referred either to the one or to the other. Even the histories of the Old and New Testaments, are far as the agency of man is introduced, are but narratives of facts done in conformity or in opposition to the moral law and done in the belief or disbelief of the gospel."

"If then a man cannot distinguish aright between the law and the gospel, he cannot rightly understand as much as a single article of divine truth. If he does not have spiritual and just apprehensions of the holy law, he cannot have spiritual and transforming discoveries of the glorious gospel; and on the other hand, if his view of the gospel is erroneous and wrong, his notions of the law cannot be right."

Not only will the message of the Bible be confusing but if the proper distinctions are not maintained than one can begin to wrongly _____ the law and gospel and in so doing destroy them both. (_____ will be messed up)

"They will, in a greater degree than can be conceived, retard their progress in holiness as well as in peace and comfort."

Chapter 1-The Law of God in General

What is the law? What do we mean when we say the "law of God"? While in the Scripture the word "law" can refer to many things when we talk about "law" in this discussion we are talking about the _____ God has given to humanity.

“The rule that God has prescribed to His rational creatures in order to direct and oblige them to the right performance of all their duties to Him. Or in other words, it is used to signify the declared will of God...it is divided into the natural law and the positive law.”

_____ **law**

“The natural law of God, or the law of nature, is that necessary and unchangeable rule of duty which is founded in the infinitely holy and righteous nature of God, to obey which all men, as the reasonable creatures of God, are and cannot but be indispensably bound...The dictates of God’s natural law are delivered with authority because they are just and reasonable in their own nature previous to any divine precept concerning them inasmuch as they are all founded in the infinite holiness, righteousness, and wisdom of His nature....(these) are ‘holy, and just, and good,’ and therefore they are commanded.”

_____ **law**

“The positive law of God comprises those institutions that depend merely on His sovereign will and which He might never have prescribed, and yet His nature always continued the same...The dictates of His positive become just and reasonable because they are delivered with authority...(these) are commanded, and therefore they are ‘holy, and just, and good’.”

Summary- *“Those commandments of God founded in the holiness and righteousness of His nature are unalterable and perpetually the same, whereas these founded on the sovereignty of His will are in themselves alterable, and He may, by His own express appointment alter them whenever He please. But till He Himself alters them, they continue to be of immutable obligation.”*

“Although the positive precepts of God are cable of being changed by Him, yet our obedience to them is built on a moral foundation. It is a moral duty, a duty of perpetual obligation, to obey in all things the revealed will of God.”

Section 1-The law as inscribed on the heart of man in his creation

Man was created in the image of God, which “consists of knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness”. The natural law of God was therefore impressed upon the _____ of man.

“Although the law, in this view of it, contained no positive precepts, yet it required man to believe everything that God should reveal and to do everything that He should command.”

“It (natural law) obliges to perfect and perpetual obedience in all possible states of the creature, where he be on earth, in heaven, or even in hell. Since man is the creature of God and since, in his creation, he was made in the image of God, he owes all possible subjection and obedience to God, considered as his benign Creator.”

Natural law is sometimes referred to as the “_____ law” of God. It is called this because *“it was a revelation of the will of God as His moral governor to the first man and was the standard and rule of all man’s moral qualities and actions.”*

All mankind is under the moral law because all mankind is under God as their _____ and _____.

“The immediate ground of the obligation of the natural law on man is the sovereign authority of God, or His absolute right to command the perfect obedience of man...The obligation of the natural law on mankind, then, as resulting from the nature of God and from the relations between God and man, is such that even God Himself cannot dispense with it. It cannot cease to bind as long as God continues to be God and man to be man, God to the sovereign Creator and man to be His dependent creature.”

“Although this natural law inscribed on the heart of Adam was much defaced by the fall, yet it was not wholly obliterated. Some faint impressions or small relics of it remain still in the minds of all men.”