

THE CHRISTIAN-CULTS¹ (CC): THE ANTINOMIANS PART 1

"But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed." - Gal 1:8

"There is only one heresy, and that is Antinomianism" (19th century Scottish theologian, John "Rabbi" Duncan, *Colloquia Peripatetica*, p.70)

"A close reading of the Westminster documents shows that the Antinomian threat was viewed with as much, if not more, seriousness by the divines than Arminianism and Roman Catholicism." (Dr. Mark Jones, *Critique of Jesus Plus Nothing*)

1. Central Doctrine

1.1. **an-ti-no-mi-an** (noun: ἀνομία = trans. "lawlessness"; lit. w/o or against the law [of God] -most specifically the OT law - Mat 23:23 w/28 w/Mat 15:1-9).

1.2. As it relates to Christian-cults, an antinomian includes any person/organization who claims to be a Christian (Mat 7:23, 23:28) yet:

1.2.1. **Practices disobedience to God's Law** (1Jo 3:4; LXX. = "iniquity, ungodliness, transgression")

1.2.2. **Rejects any portion of God's Law** (Mat 24:12; Rom 6:19; Jam 2:10-11)

1.2.3. **Believes/teaches that maintaining faithful obedience to all of God's Law is not necessary to remaining in covenant relationship w/God (i.e. to being saved).** (Mat 7:21-23. 24-27 = those condemned believed their lawlessness would have no bearing on their salvation as long as they had some fruit ["did we not...in your name?"]²; Deu 29:18-20 w/Heb12:14-17 = the author of Hebrews re-establishes the warning of the Deuteronomy text which is: don't be deceived into thinking their salvation was not dependent on their obedience to all of God's commands [see Heb 5:9]; Eph 5:5-7 = the "empty words" are those which promise salvation w/o the necessity of obedience: 2Pe 3:14-17 w/2Pe 2:1 = the damnable "error of lawless/antinomian people" is their twisting of Paul's commands regarding unblemished living as necessary to salvation": judgment according to our works also shows the fallacy of thinking we have no obligation to faithful obedience in relation to the Law for salvation - Rom 2:6-8; 2Co 5:10; 1Pe 1:17; Rev 20:11-15).

1.3. Antinomianism is embraced by its adherents based one or more of the following assumptions:

1.3.1. **OT Law is no longer in force (Dispensationalism; Rom 10:4)**

"The age of the church has rendered the Law inoperative (Wayne G. Strickland, *Five Views on Law and Gospel*)

"Dispensationalism fits (the) model of classical Antinomianism virtually to the letter. My plea to all dispensationalists is this - show me the fundamental error in what I teach or admit your fundamental error. We cannot both be right. One of us is wrong - seriously wrong. If you are wrong (in your doctrine, as I here charge), you are preaching nothing less than a false gospel. This calls for genuine repentance and fruits worthy of it before the Lord Jesus Christ whom we both profess to love and serve." (Dr. John Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*)

1.3.2. **The Law exists to bring conviction/condemnation: to tell us what we can't do; the Gospel to bring hope/promise: to tell us what Christ has done on our behalf (Lutheranism/Law-Gospel Dichotomy; Rom 3:20-22; 1Ti 1:6-11)**

¹ Cult is simply another word for sect which itself is a transliteration of the Greek word "heresy" (αἵρεσις). As such it refers to those groups/churches/religions who are a false representation of the original.

² There are only three options when considering the obligation of the Law in relation to our salvation: 1) faithfulness to ALL of the Law is necessary for salvation, 2) faithfulness to NONE of the Law is necessary for salvation, 3) faithfulness to SOME of the Law is necessary for salvation. Jesus' condemnation of these individuals b/c of antinomianism (v23 - "depart from Me your workers of lawlessness"), makes it clear that not only is the first option (ALL is necessary) the view of Jesus, but also that He condemns as antinomian anyone embracing options two or three (NONE/SOME is necessary). Such is the position of R. Scott Clark, "To say or even to imply that Christians must be faithful in order to be accepted by God is nothing less than an attack on the finished work of Christ and the denial of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Any preacher who says or even implies such thing should be repudiated in the same way the Apostle Paul repudiated the Apostle Peter as a denier of the gospel." (*Justification By Faith Alone Is The Normative Doctrine*)

"...when the Law and the Gospel are compared together, as well as Moses himself, the teacher of the Law, and Christ the teacher of the Gospel, we believe, teach, and confess that the Gospel is not a preaching of repentance, convicting of sins, but that it is properly nothing else than a certain most joyful message and preaching full of consolation, not convicting or terrifying, inasmuch as it comforts the conscience against the terrors of the Law, and bids it look at the merit of Christ alone" (Formula of Concord, sec. 6)

1.3.3. The only OT laws now in force, are those repeated in the NT (**New Covenant Theology**; 1Co 9:21; Gal 6:2)

"The version of law in the Old Covenant era was the Mosaic Law, which included the Ten Commandments. The version of law in the New Covenant era is the law of Christ, which includes the commands of Christ that pertain to the New Covenant era and the commands of his Apostles. (Geoff Volker, What is NCT?)

1.3.4. Obeying the Law is the works/performance-based salvation of the OC/Pharisees that is condemned by Jesus and the NT writers (**Legalism**; Mat 23:4; Luk 18:9-12; Gal 2:16; Rom 3:28)

"The Pharisees were legalists who thought they could earn their way to heaven..." (John MacArthur, *MacArthur Commentary, Luke*, ch. 1:1-7)

1.3.5. Faith (i.e. belief/trust) in Jesus Christ alone is now the only thing truly necessary to get into heaven (**Free Grace**; Joh 3:16, 6:47; Eph 2:8-9)

"Commitment and obedience and perseverance are ...not conditions of everlasting life. Belief (i.e. faith) in Jesus is the sole condition." (Bob Wilkins, What is Free Grace Theology?)

"Grace includes the Christian's liberty to do whatever he pleases" (Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Grace*)

"Undeserved grace creates a life of un-required obedience." (Tullian Tchividjian, *Jesus Plus Nothing Equals Everything*)

1.3.6. A person's justification by faith alone (in Christ alone) cannot be lost (**Eternal Justification/Love of God**; 2Ti 2:12-13; Rom 8:30-39)

"God's love for us does not change in relation to our good (or bad) behavior." (Tullian Tchividjian, *Jesus Plus Nothing Equals Everything*)

"The Christian's disobedience does not affect his salvation, but fellowship, peace, and growth." (C.I. Scofield, *Question Box*)

"Normally one who has believed can be described as a believer; that is, one who continues to believe. But...a believer may come to the place of not believing and yet God will not disown him, since He cannot disown Himself. We can 'shrink back' far enough to lose our rewards, but no so far that we lose our salvation." (Charles Ryrie, *So Great a Salvation*)

"Warnings (in Scripture) evoke faith that perseveres in holy devotion but are not given in order to imply a potential, future (negative) outcome. Warnings...have primarily a motivational function. They are the means by which God leads believers on to their assured salvation (and should not be mined for further theological implications)." (Tom Schreiner, *The Race Set Before Us*)

1.3.7. Jesus obeyed the Law on the Christian's behalf (**Imputation of Active Obedience of Christ**; Rom 5:19)

"If Christ had only earned forgiveness of sins for us, then we would not merit heaven. Our guilt would have been removed, but we would simply be in the position of (neutrality). For this reason, Christ had to live a life of perfect obedience to God in order to earn righteousness for us. He had to obey the law for his whole life on our behalf so that the positive merits of his perfect obedience would be counted for us. Sometimes this is called Christ's "active obedience." (Wayne Grudem, The Active Obedience of Christ)

1.3.8. As Christians, sanctification is not accomplished through commitment to the Law, but as we glory (and put faith) in Christ and His justifying work (**New Reformed/Calvinism, Gospel Sanctification, "Beholding is becoming"**; Phi 2:12-13; Rom 8:29; 2Co 3:18).

"The distinction between antinomian and other Christian views on moral law is that antinomians believe that obedience to the law is motivated by an internal principle flowing from belief

rather than from any external compulsion." (David Como, *Blown by the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil-War England*)

"For the Reformed theologian, good works are genuinely human actions. For the antinomian, good works are divine actions, the direct action of God within the human person." (Dr. John Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*)

"(2Co 3:18) was one of the greatest secrets I ever discovered: *Beholding is becoming*. Introspection must give way to amazement at glory. When it does, *becoming* happens. If there is any key to maturity, it is that. *Behold your God in Jesus Christ*. Then you will make progress." (John Piper. Letter to an Incomplete. Insecure Teenager) ...The pathway to Christ-likeness is 'beholding the glory of the Lord' (2Co 3:18). Beholding is becoming...the foundational means of our sanctification is beholding the glory of God in the face of Christ." (John Piper, *God is the Gospel*).

"Sanctification is simply getting used to your justification - it's receiving Christ's words. 'It is finished' into our rebellious regions of unbelief. (Thus) sanctification is the daily hard work of going back to the reality of our justification." (Tullian Tchividjian, *Jesus Plus Nothing Equals Everything*)³

"The gospel is not about being on this endless treadmill of do more and try harder, but it's resting under the banner of 'It is finished'. Change happens through seeing and savoring the beauty of Christ. Beholding is becoming Christ-like." (Acts 29 pastor, Andy Beams, 2015 sermon)

"As someone with some scholarly acquaintance with post-Reformation Reformed theology, particularly in the area of Puritanism, I have been dismayed at some of the theology that passes as reformed, when in fact it has corollaries to seventeenth-century antinomianism." (Dr. Mark Jones, *Antinomianism*)

1.4. As such, each of the theological systems/doctrines established by the above assumptions (Dispensationalism, Lutheranism, NCT, Legalism, Free Grace, Eternal Justification, AO, Gospel Sanctification, New Calvinism, "Beholding is Becoming") are oftentimes the tell-tale sign that the person/organization is antinomian.

"Where lawlessness is a Christian possibility, antinomianism is a certainty" (RSJ)

1.5. Though not true of all those guilty of this false gospel heresy, there is another reason antinomianism is embraced: it builds bigger churches.

"Some prefer popularity to plain dealing. We love to see a crowd of worldly-minded hearers, rather than 'a little flock, a peculiar people zealous of good works'. We dare not shake our congregations to purpose, lest our five thousand should, in three years' time, be reduced to a hundred and twenty. In short, we have so introduced our people to strange doctrines, and preposterous assertions, that, if we were to intimate, God himself sets us a pattern of Antinomianism, by disregarding his own most holy and lovely law, I doubt whether some would not be highly pleased, and say we had preached a sound and sweet discourse'. This would probably be the case, if we addressed them in such a manner as to make them believe they are ...those who have found out a short way to heaven, and maintain, 'We are absolutely to do nothing in order to salvation'." (18th cent. pastor and theologian, John Fletcher, *Five Checks to Antinomianism*)

In this light consider: (Mat 7:13-14, 21-23; Luk 6:26, 13:22-27).

2. List of Contemporary Antinomian organizations, pastors/teachers or theologians

The vast majority of Evangelical churches: most (all?) Dispensational churches, Charismatic churches, Calvary Chapels, Quaker/Friends churches, Evangelical Free churches, Acts 29 churches, Saddleback Church, Willow Creek Church, Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, Cherry Hills Community Church, Colorado Community Church, Flatirons Community Church, Mission Hills Community Church, Foothills Bible Church, Southern Gables Church, Faith Bible Chapel; the vast majority of para-church organizations: Gospel Coalition, Monergism.com, Liberate Conference(defunct), Campus Crusade for Christ, Navigators, Promise-Keepers; the vast majority of Christian colleges and seminaries: most (all?) Wheaton college, Westmont college, Liberty University, Biola University, Fuller Seminary, Talbot Seminary, Denver Seminary, Westminster Seminary CA, Dallas Theological Seminary; the vast majority of

³ For a more extensive discussion on this subject see Timothy Kauffman's article in the Trinity Review, <http://www.trinityfoundation.org/PDF/Review%20304%20Sanctification%20Half%20Full%20-%20Kauffman.pdf>

Evangelical pastors, teachers and theologians: Billy Graham, Rick Warren, Bill Hybels, John Piper, Tim Keller, D.A. Carson, Tullian Tchividjian, Paul David Tripp, C.J. Mahaney, Steve Brown, Francis Chan, R. Scott Clark, Michael Horton, , Charles Stanley, Charles Ryrie, Zane Hodges, Chuck Swindoll, George Mueller, C.I. Scofield, Lewis Sperry Chaffey, all women pastors, Beth Moore, Elyse Fitzpatrick.