

Antinomianism in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

An Illustration of the Consequences of Rejecting God's Law

Robert E. Fugate, Ph.D.



“We follow the Spirit, not ‘the letter’ of the Bible!”

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Sketch on front cover by Talitha M. Fugate, based on Anabaptists in St. Gall, Switzerland, who burned their New Testaments because “the letter kills” (2 Cor 3:6)

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Antinomianism in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

Introduction

Definition

Antinomianism is a notoriously difficult word to define, since groups of differing theological persuasions define it differently. What one group calls “antinomian” another group may call “liberty” or being “under grace,” while referring to the first group as “legalistic.” The most common definition of antinomianism in church history is “*the rejection of the moral law as a rule of life for believers in Christ under the gospel.*” Or a slightly more expanded definition is, “the denial that the law which was originally inscribed on the heart, which was summarily comprehended in the Decalogue, and which was expounded in all of Scripture is the rule for the Christian.” The word “antinomian” comes from two Greek words, anti (against) and no,moj (law), thus denoting “against law,” or more specifically, “against God’s law.” The term “antinomianism” was coined by Martin Luther in his controversy with Johann Agricola. However, the principle of antinomianism is referred to in the New Testament, and it reappears in ever-varying forms throughout the history of the church.

Three types of antinomianism

As a rough generalization, we may distinguish between three types of antinomianism: *Gnostic* antinomianism, *mystical* antinomianism, and *evangelical* antinomianism. **Gnostic antinomianism** is rooted in Greek dualism with its metaphysical view of good and evil—spirit is good, matter is evil. Salvation means to be saved from the material or physical world (e.g., from flesh), and it comes through knowledge. Furthermore, material or bodily defilement would not affect the spirit. Gnostic antinomianism was common in the Patristic period of the church. Examples of Gnostic antinomians include: the Nicolaitans, Basilides, Carpocrates and his son Epiphanes, Valentinus, the Adamites, the Ophites or Naassenes, the Cainites, Cerdo and his

greatest disciple Marcion, and Manichaeism.¹ (Marcion and the Manichees were ascetics.) Marcion's dualism and his false antithesis between law and love (contra Ro 13:7–10) led him to postulate different Gods in the Old and New Testaments. Marcion ascribed the Mosaic Law to the wrathful Demiurge, i.e., Jehovah, the Creator-God of the Old Testament. The New Testament God is the God of love and grace. The Cainites also sought to defy the authority of Jehovah (the Demiurge) and practice whatever is forbidden in the Mosaic Law. Thus the Cainites' heroes were Cain, Esau, Korah, the Sodomites, and all other characters reprobated in the Old Testament. About 420 A.D. Augustine wrote "Answer to an Enemy of the Law and the Prophets" to defend the Old Testament from accusations contained in a Marcionite (?) work that was being eagerly read and listened to in Carthage.² Throughout church history persons and sects enamored with Greek philosophy have been susceptible to Gnostic antinomian errors.

The second type of antinomianism, **mystical antinomianism**, has also been found throughout the history of the church. During the Middle Ages much antinomianism was both mystical and pantheistic, teaching that man's spirit (which is God) could not sin, and that it is not affected by the flesh (which is reminiscent of Greek dualism). For instance, Amaury of Paris (also called Amalric of Bena) taught that all laws are at an end in the reign of the Holy Spirit. One of his maxims was, "To those constituted in love no sin is imputed."³ The Brethren of the Free Spirit, associated with Ortlieb of Strassburg (c. 1200), held a similar view

¹ Quotes from, and rebuttals of, several of these heretics have been gleaned from the church fathers in Arland J. Hultgren and Steven A. Haggmark, eds., *The Earliest Christian Heretics: Readings from Their Opponents* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996).

² Augustine, "Answer to an Enemy of the Law and the Prophets," *Arianism and Other Heresies*, transl. Roland J. Teske, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle, part 1, vol. 18 (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1995), pp. 357–449.

³ A.H. Newman and G. Kawerau, "Antinomianism and Antinomian Controversies," *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (SHERK), ed. Samuel M. Jackson, 13 vols. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1908–1912), 1:196–201.

of the leading of the Spirit apart from law. Johann Hartmann taught that a man free in spirit is rendered impeccable and can do whatever he chooses and whatever pleases him. Of course, when mystical antinomians reject subjection to any law other than the Holy Spirit, they mean the Holy Spirit as witnessed to and interpreted by themselves. Such mystical antinomianism was widespread during the later Middle Ages and was perpetuated in some of the parties at the time of the Protestant Reformation. We will reserve our comments concerning the third type of antinomianism, evangelical antinomianism, for our discussion of sixteenth and seventeenth century antinomians.

Sixteenth and seventeenth century antinomians

Agricola and other Lutherans

The antinomian controversy was one of the first internal controversies among the Lutherans. It was precipitated by Johann Agricola of Eisleben (1492?–1566), one of the most significant evangelical antinomians of the sixteenth century. Interestingly, Agricola had been one of Luther's students, and he became one of Luther's most faithful and intimate companions in the German Reformation. He participated in the Leipzig Disputation (1519) and in the burning of the papal bull (1520). He assisted Luther in the literary defeat of Anabaptist Thomas Muntzer (leader of the Zwickau "prophets"). The highly-regarded Agricola was appointed court chaplain of electoral Saxony's delegation at the diets in Speyer (1526 and 1529) and Augsburg (1530).

Subsequently, Agricola began to teach a one-sided view of justification by faith alone (as opposed to works-righteousness), which both Melanchthon and Luther opposed. In 1527 Agricola challenged Melanchthon's teaching that the Law could produce repentance. Melanchthon went on to develop his third use of the law or didactic use, i.e., the moral/eternal law is a perpetual guide

to Christians.⁴ That same year Luther was able to construct a temporary truce between the two.⁵ However, from 1537 to 1540 repeated antinomian skirmishes surfaced between Agricola and other Lutherans. Luther began to regard Agricola as an enemy about 1537. By 1538 Luther called Agricola deceitful, and a liar and a hypocrite.⁶

Agricola's antinomian teaching regarding the relevance of the Mosaic Law under the New Covenant may be summarized as follows:

1. Men are not to be prepared for the gospel or conversion by the preaching of the law (contra Ro 7:7; Gal 3:24).
2. Repentance is not to be taught out of the Decalogue or any law of Moses, but from the violation of the Son of God in the gospel (citing Lk 24:47; Ro 2:4).
3. When thou art in the midst of sin, only believe, and thou art in the midst of salvation.
4. The law is not worthy to be called the Word of God.
5. A believer is above all law and all obedience.
6. Good works profit nothing to salvation. Ill works tend not to damnation.
7. Our faith and New Testament religion were unknown to Moses.⁷

⁴ Philip Melancthon, *Melancthon on Christian Doctrine: Loci communes 1555*, transl. and ed. Clyde L. Manschreck (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1965), chap. 7, "Of Divine Law." The two other uses of the Law were considered to be political (civil law) and pedagogical (pointing the sinner to Christ).

⁵ For Luther's compromise teaching, see *Luther's Works* [LW], 55 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963), 40:275. At this time Luther was overconfident that he had resolved the issue (LW, 49:182f).

⁶ Martin Luther, *Table Talk*, #4050, LW, 54:314. Luther also included Jacob Schenk in this description (ibid.; cf. pp. 289f).

⁷ William Young, "Antinomianism," *Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed. Edwin H. Palmer, vol. 1 (Wilmington, DE: National Foundation for Christian Education, 1964), pp. 275. Cp. Samuel Rutherford, *A Survey of the Spirituall Antichrist* (London: J.D. & R.I., 1648), pp. 81f; Anthony Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis: Or, A Vindication of the Moral Law and the Covenants, From the Errors of Papists, Arminians, and More Especially, Antinomians*, 2nd ed. (London: James Young, 1647), p. 277 (as erroneously paginated in the original); SHERK, 1:199.

Agricola also emphasized the fact that the Holy Spirit is not given by the Law (Gal 3:2), and that the Holy Spirit is the agent producing conviction (Jn 16:8), not the Law.

Agricola intended to guard the doctrine of justification by faith alone by absolutely divorcing it from the Law and good works. He also sought to guard Christian liberty from legalism by removing the Law from the Church. Agricola was not libertine (i.e., teaching that freedom in Christ is freedom from the flesh), nor was he a Gnostic/Marcionite antinomian. But he regarded the Old Testament revelation—particularly the Decalogue—as *an unsuccessful attempt of God* to guide his people by means of commandments and threats.⁸ Agricola reportedly went so far as to say that Moses should be hanged!

Two fundamental observations can be made regarding Agricola's teaching on the Law. First, he posited a sharp dichotomy between the Old and New Testaments, devoid of covenant continuity. Second, he viewed Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the gospel as antithetical to the Law, which, in actuality, pits Christ against Moses and denies the Spirit's inspiration of the Old Testament (contra 1 Pt 1:11; 2 Pt 1:20f).

Agricola could muster support for his antinomian teaching by citing rash, unguarded statements that both Luther and Melancthon had made regarding justification and the Law, in the heat of their battle with Rome. For instance, Luther said:

“Christ is not harsh, severe, biting as Moses. . . . Therefore, away with Moses forever, who shall not terrify deluded hearts.”

“The gospel is heavenly and divine, the law earthly and human; the righteousness of the gospel is just as distinct from that of the law as heaven from earth, as light from

Luther's rebuttal of the antinomian theses may be found in the German edition of his works, WA¹:343ff, 360–584.

⁸ Gerhard Krodel, “Enthusiasm,” *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*, ed. Julius Bodensieck, 3 vols. (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1965), 1:786 (italics added).

darkness. The gospel is light and day, the law darkness and night.”

“We will take our stand on the right ground and say that these sin-teachers and Mosaic prophets shall leave us unconfounded by Moses; we will neither see nor hear Moses. How does this please you, dear revolutionists? And we say further that all such Mosaic teachers [i.e., the Zwickau prophets] deny the gospel, banish Christ, and overthrow the whole New Testament. I speak now as a Christian and for Christians, since Moses was given to the Jewish people alone and has nothing to do with us Gentiles and Christians. We have our gospel and New Testament; if they will prove from this that pictures are to be done away with, we will gladly follow them. But if they wish by means of Moses to make Jews of us, we will not suffer it.”

“In the New Covenant there is no longer a constraining and forcing law; and that those who must be scared and driven by laws are unworthy the name Christians.”

Melanchthon, in his first edition of his *Loci communes*, wrote, “It must be admitted that the Decalogue is abrogated.”⁹

Of course, these isolated statements hardly represent the overall teaching of either Luther or Melanchthon on the subject of the law.

In combating the legalistic element in medieval Roman Catholic teaching and in the radical religious parties of the early Reformation time, Luther allowed himself to use language in disparagement of the Mosaic law so strong and unqualified as to give great encouragement to those that were eager for fleshly freedom. ... Of course, he did not mean utterly to repudiate Moses, but rather by a *tour de*

⁹ The above quotations from Luther and Melanchthon are cited by A.H. Newman and G. Kawerau, “Antinomianism and Antinomian Controversies,” *SHERK*, 1:198, and in “Antinomians,” *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* [MSt], eds. John M’Clintock and James Strong, 10 vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1867–1887), 1:265.

force to repudiate what he considered to be an unauthorized use of Moses.¹⁰

Luther himself explained that the circumstances in which he had penned such words were “very dissimilar” to the present exigency caused by antinomians “who are of themselves already so secure that they fall away from grace. ... If you see the afflicted and contrite, preach grace as much as you can. But not to the secure, the slothful, the harlots, adulterers, and blasphemers.”¹¹

Clearly, the Ten Commandments comprised a significant part in Luther’s catechisms.¹² The 1555 edition of Melanchthon’s *Loci* also explicitly taught the permanence of God’s moral law.¹³

Luther criticized Agricola for not recognizing that Christians are still sinners, and hence they can never leave behind the law, which continually discloses sin. The following are examples of Luther’s opposition to Agricola’s antinomianism:

Anybody who abolishes the teaching of the law in a political context abolishes government and domestic life, and anybody who abolishes the law in an ecclesiastical context ceases to have a knowledge of sin. The gospel doesn’t expose sin except through the law, which is spiritual and which defines sin as opposition to God’s will. Away with him who claims that transgressors don’t sin against the law but only dishonor the Son of God! Such speculative theologians are the bane of the churches. Without a conscience, without knowledge, and without logical discrimination they teach everything confusedly and say things like this, ‘Love is the fulfillment of the law, and

¹⁰ A.H. Newman and G. Kawerau, “Antinomianism and Antinomian Controversies,” *SHERK*, 1:198.

¹¹ Martin Luther, *LW*, 47:104f.

¹² For a good summary of Luther’s teaching on the Christian’s relationship to the Law, see Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), pp. 266–273. Samuel Rutherford went to great lengths to exonerate Luther from the charge of antinomianism (*A Survey of the Spirituall Antichrist*, pp. 70–163).

¹³ Philip Melanchthon, *Melanchthon on Christian Doctrine: Loci communes 1555*, chap. 7, “Of Divine Law.”

therefore we have no need of the law.’ But those wretched fellows neglect the minor premise: that this fulfilment (namely, love) is weak in our flesh, that we must struggle daily against the flesh with the help of the Spirit, and this belongs under the law.¹⁴

It’s [Agricola’s antinomian teaching] the crassest error to reject the law. ... To reject the law, without which neither church nor civil authority nor home nor any individual can exist, is to kick the bottom out of the barrel. It’s time to resist. I can’t and I won’t stand for it.¹⁵

They [the antinomians] increase the presumption among secure people, and I now see so much presumption in the antinomians that under the covering of trust in [God’s] mercy they dare to do whatever they please, as if the believer no longer sins and as if believers are so righteous that they don’t need any preaching of the law. They dream of a church as righteous as Adam was in paradise, though the wrath of God was revealed from heaven against him when God said, ‘Adam, you may eat of every fruit, but if you eat of this tree you shall die.’”¹⁶

On account of the great sense of security it’s necessary to thunder and lightning with the law.¹⁷

Elsewhere Luther corresponded with a civil magistrate, explaining that to live without laws governing marriage would produce a society like that of the time of Noah (Gn 6:2), with men acting like the Egyptian Pharaohs or like King Herod (Mt 14:3f).¹⁸

Luther saw that, through antinomian enthusiasm, the devil intended to take away not merely the Law, but Christ.¹⁹ For it was Christ who (ultimately) gave the Law (1 Pt 1:10f), who perfectly obeyed

¹⁴ Martin Luther, *Table Talk*, #3554, LW, 54:233f.

¹⁵ Martin Luther, *Table Talk*, #3650a, LW, 54:248.

¹⁶ Martin Luther, *Table Talk*, #4002, LW, 54:308

¹⁷ Martin Luther, *Table Talk*, #4007, LW, 54:309.

¹⁸ Martin Luther, LW, 50:309f.

¹⁹ Martin Luther, LW, 47:110.

the Law, and who taught the full meaning of the Law (Mt 5:17–19).

Other Lutheran antinomians quickly appeared, including Andreas Poach, Anton Otto, Andreas Musculus, and Michael Neander. By the late 1540's Melanchthon had become convinced that the gospel, not the law, was alone capable of bringing about true repentance.²⁰ This modification in Melanchthon's theology has prompted some to conclude that, "Paradoxically Melanchthon and his supporters, the Philippists, adopted an antinomianism similar to that of Agricola with their thesis that the gospel is a message of repentance."²¹

Not until the Formula of Concord (1577) were Lutherans able to come to a compromise agreement concerning antinomianism. The Formula of Concord upholds the three functions of the Law. Regarding the third function it states, "After they are reborn, and although the flesh still inheres in them, to give them on that account *a definite rule according to which they should pattern and regulate their entire life*. ... [The Law is] *the unchangeable will of God*."²² In another place the Formula adds, "We justly condemn the Antinomians or nomoclasts who cast the preaching of the law out of the churches and would have us criticize sin and teach contrition and sorrow not from the law but solely from the Gospel."²³

With regard to the Lutheran antinomian controversies, Timothy Wengert makes the insightful observation, "That these [antinomian] disputes dominated especially Lutheran circles shows

²⁰ Timothy J. Wengert, "Antinomianism," *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation* (OER), ed. Hans J. Hillerbrand, 4 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 1:52.

²¹ Steffen Kjeldgaard-Pedersen, "Antinomian Controversies," *Encyclopedia of Christianity*, eds. Fahlbusch, *et al.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 1:80f.

²² Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article 6 "The Third Function of the Law," in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, transl. and ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), pp. 479–481 (italics added).

²³ Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article 5 "Law and Gospel," in *The Book of Concord*, p. 561.

the tension within Luther's own thought and the interaction between a Lutheran doctrine of justification and a hermeneutic based on the relation between law and gospel."²⁴ In the opinion of this writer, the Lutheran hermeneutic that makes law antithetical to gospel/grace is unsound, and it leads to theological contradictions and weak praxis.

Libertines

The term "Libertine" (cp. "synagogue of the Libertines" who opposed Stephen, Ac 6:9 KJV, ASV) is used generally to describe those people who are theologically heterodox ("free-thinking") and morally reprobate ("free-living"). In particular, the Libertines were a group of Calvin's opponents who were pantheistic and antinomian. They followed the errors of Gnosticism, Manichaeism (whose adherents rejected the Old Testament), medieval Quietistic mysticism, and pantheism.²⁵ Thus their particular brand of antinomianism was both Gnostic and mystical.

Several independent groups of Libertines were scattered throughout the Netherlands, Belgium, Lower Germany, France, Italy, and Switzerland. The Netherlands' Libertines (called Loists) were led by Eligius (Loy) Pruystinck, who, in 1524, traveled to Wittenberg to dispute his doctrine with Luther. Luther arraigned Loy as heretical on eight counts, one being that he identified the reason of man with the Holy Spirit.²⁶ The Holy Spirit may be described as a universal Intellect. Loy also taught: a radical dualism between man's flesh and spirit, in which neither exercises any influence upon the other; the reborn man's spirit cannot sin (1 Jn 3:9); the spirit of man incurs no responsibility for the sins of the flesh; the final goal of man is to vanish into the divine being (i.e., no personal immortality).

²⁴ Timothy J. Wengert, "Antinomianism," OER, 1:53.

²⁵ John Calvin, *John Calvin: Treatises Against the Anabaptists and Against the Libertines*, transl. and ed. Benjamin W. Farley (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), pp. 190–199. Calvin also compares the Libertines to the heretics denounced in 2 Peter 2 and in the book of Jude.

²⁶ George H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), pp. 351f.

Calvin concerned himself with the French-speaking Libertines (also called Quintinists), who were led by Quintin of Hainaut, Coppin of Lille (Netherlands), Bertrand of Moulins, Claude Perceval, and Anthony Pocquet (formerly of Geneva). Much to Calvin's consternation, three of these Libertines found refuge at the court of Marguerite d'Angouleme (Queen of Lower Navarre and Nerac, and sister of King Francis I; she befriended the Reformation and had corresponded several times with Calvin). Quintin was made doorkeeper-usher, Pocquet was made chaplain, and Perceval became a valet. According to Calvin, the Libertines numbered about 4,000, but he feared that as many as 10,000 might have been tainted by their errors.²⁷

In 1545 Calvin wrote his treatise "Against the Fantastic and Raging Sect of the Libertines Who Call Themselves 'Spirituals.'"²⁸ In this treatise Calvin refuted numerous Libertine heresies. For instance, the Libertines taught a spiritualistic and deterministic pantheism, making God to be the author and approver of sin (thereby obliterating any distinction between good and evil), denying human agency and accountability, and extending Christian liberty to all things, so as to make all things lawful. He also accused the Libertines of: using deliberately obscure language; misguided hermeneutics (i.e., allegorical interpretation of Scripture); minimizing the humanity of Jesus and his suffering; teaching that one single divine Spirit or universal essence so permeates—and even constitutes—everything, and works in such a way that mankind has no reason or will (i.e., pantheistic determinism); teaching that the regenerate nature cannot sin (1 Jn 3:9) but only the flesh sins; teaching Christians to ignore sin; practicing a communism of goods and wives; and teaching that the

²⁷John Calvin, *John Calvin: Treatises Against the Anabaptists and Against the Libertines*, p. 164.

²⁸ For an English translation see, John Calvin, *John Calvin: Treatises Against the Anabaptists and Against the Libertines*. Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* also contains several allusions to the Libertines (ed. John T. McNeill, transl. Ford L. Battles, 2 vols. [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960], p. 1722). Cp. Samuel Rutherford, *A Survey of the Spirituall Antichrist*, pp. 2–6.

general resurrection is past (based upon proof-texts Jn 11:26; Ec 12:7; Eph 2:19; Col 3:1).

In the Libertine view, regeneration creates ontological perfection, restoring mankind to pre-Fall sinlessness and complete innocence (not knowing evil). Hence one may now do what Adam did before he sinned—follow one’s natural sense of direction or instincts, for they are all of God.

Being antinomian, the Libertines rejected the Mosaic law and law in general as inapplicable to the spiritual man. Calvin bemoaned, “If anyone replied to them by citing Scripture, they would respond that we shouldn’t be subject to the ‘letter that kills but to the Spirit who gives life [2 Cor 3:6].’”²⁹ This Scripture provided their key hermeneutical principle. The Libertines were also fond of citing proof-texts to support their principle that it is wrong to pass judgment (i.e., Mt 7:1, 5; Jn 8:7; Ro 14:10).³⁰

Having denied the reality of evil, sin, and repentance, the Libertines felt free to lie, steal, and indulge the flesh. Indeed, anything and everything was God-ordained and legitimate. This is “Christian” liberty with a vengeance!

Anabaptists of Germany and Netherlands

The term “Anabaptist” (from Greek *ana* again + *baptisma* baptism = re-baptism) is a comprehensive designation of various sixteenth century groups in Continental Europe who refused to allow their children to be baptized and who practiced believers’ baptism (although not necessarily by immersion). However, being an underground movement having no organizational structure, its beliefs and practices differed widely. During the sixteenth century there were well over twenty different groups of Anabaptists. Consequently, generalized statements about Anabaptist theology and practice are often applicable to most Anabaptist groups, but not all of them. Having made that qualification, let us consider the typical Anabaptist attitude toward the Old Testament.

²⁹ John Calvin, *John Calvin: Treatises Against the Anabaptists and Against the Libertines*, p. 221.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 254–258.

The Anabaptists taught a radical discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments.³¹ “The Old Testament was given to the Jews alone and had no authority for Christians. The Old was especially inferior to the New, because the hope of everlasting life was lacking.”³² Furthermore, Anabaptists viewed the Old Testament believers as not possessing the Holy Spirit. Zwingli, Calvin, Bullinger, and many others attest that such were the Anabaptists’ teachings.³³ The *Mennonite Encyclopedia* attempts to mitigate such attacks. However, even their pro-Anabaptist discussion contains the following admissions:

- Anabaptists were encouraged to read mainly from the New Testament (and the Psalms).
- “All things are contained in the New Testament, for the apostles are the summary of all the prophets.”
- “To place the Old Testament saints on the same level as those of the New, seemed to Marpeck a blasphemy.”
- The law of love (in contrast to the Old Testament laws) controls the behavior of the Christian.
- “The Anabaptist attitude toward the Old Testament can be described as...not stressing the Old Testament revelation except where it is in accord with the New.”
- “Their [Marpeck and Menno Simons’] use of the Old Testament was, however, such as to draw inspiration from

³¹ There were exceptions, such as the German Anabaptist Thomas Muntzer, one of the “Zwickau prophets” who prophesied judgment in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets. Muntzer became a leader in the Peasant’s Revolt, for which he was executed in 1525. Another exception was Bernhard Rothmann, a former Roman Catholic priest who founded the Anabaptist congregation in Munster, Germany, in 1532. The Munsterites patterned their kingdom upon the Old Testament, including royalty, polygamy, etc.

³² Willem Balke, *Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), p. 310.

³³ Some examples are given by William Klassen, “Old Testament,” *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, ed. Harold S. Bender, et. al., 4 vols. (Scottsdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1959), 4:50. See Samuel Rutherford, *A Survey of the Spirituall Antichrist*, pp. 6–24.

the acts of God in the history of His people, and not to draw an ethic from a time when God’s fullest revelation had not yet appeared.”

- “It [the Old Testament] was for them [Anabaptists] literature of edification, but the standards of the Christian life were to be drawn from the New Testament.”³⁴

Clearly mainstream Anabaptism postulated that Old Testament and New Testament salvation and ethics are radically different—and even antithetical. Old Testament faith and practice are markedly inferior, and they are not binding upon Christians.

Conversely, Calvin (like Bucer)³⁵ differentiates the Old and New Testaments by their chronological position in the plan of salvation, not by their content. In both Testaments the theme was salvation through Christ as revealed in the gospel. Christ came to renew and confirm the covenant that the Jews had broken, and to extend it to all peoples, rather than to bring another covenant new in itself.³⁶ The Old Testament gave the prophetic promises; the New Testament proclaimed their fulfillment.

Intertestamental discontinuity was not the only hermeneutical point of contention between the Reformers and the Anabaptists. Those Anabaptists of charismatic bent based their Biblical interpretation

³⁴ *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, 4:50f. Interestingly, the *Mennonite Encyclopedia* has no listing for “antinomianism” or for “mysticism.”

³⁵ For a general discussion of Bucer’s influence on Calvin, see Wilhelm Pauck, *The Heritage of the Reformation*, rev. (n.p.: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), pp. 85–99. Both Calvin and Bucer were influenced by Augustine’s treatise, “Reply to Faustus the Manichaeon” (in NPNF1, 4:151ff); see especially 15:11; 19:13; 19:16.

³⁶ Francois Wendel, *Calvin: The Origins and Development of His Religious Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), pp. 208–214. Willem Balke, *Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals*, pp. 309–318, 99–101. See Calvin’s commentary on Mt 5:17–21ff, which Calvin elsewhere summarizes, “The intention of our Lord Jesus was not to add anything to it [the Mosaic Law], but solely to restore the true meaning of the law in its entirety, which the rabbis had reversed by their false glosses” (*John Calvin: Treatises Against the Anabaptists and Against the Libertines*, p. 78). See also Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2:10–11.

on personal, divine inspiration. The literal text of the Scriptures was used to support the Spirit's message when dealing with nonbelievers. A clear proponent of such charismatic "exegesis" was the Anabaptist prophet, David Joris.³⁷ The Reformers appealed to an inherently infallible Bible that must be interpreted by scholarly grammatical-historical exegesis. Conversely, the Anabaptist enthusiasts believed that the Bible is infallible when interpreted by a prophetically-inspired person. Thus the charismatic Anabaptists held that prophetic inspiration was given them to understand the Bible aright.³⁸ In short, charismatic Anabaptist theology was grounded upon infallible, ongoing, progressive revelation. These ongoing revelations were the basis for interpreting the Bible. They could also supercede the Biblical revelation. Such revelations, by definition, could not be arraigned before the judgment seat of Scripture—they were uncorrectable (except by future revelations).

Other Anabaptists were much more radical in their antinomian lifestyles. In St. Gall, Switzerland, some Anabaptists burned New Testaments in ovens because "the letter kills" (2 Cor 3:6). Naturally, this led to immorality, murder, etc.³⁹ Bullinger describes the excesses of some Swiss Anabaptists:

And whereas they be wholly given to such foul and detestable sensuality, they do interpret it to be the commandment of the Heavenly Father, persuading women and honest matrons that it is impossible for them to be partakers of the Kingdom of Heaven unless they do abominably prostitute and make common their own bodies to all men, since it is written, we must forsake and renounce all things that we love best, and that we ought to suffer all kinds of infamy or reproach for Christ's sake,

³⁷ Gary K. Waite, "Joris, David," OER, 2:354. See Samuel Rutherford, *A Survey of the Spirituall Antichrist*, pp. 13–15.

³⁸ Ronald A. Knox, *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion* (New York: Oxford University, 1950), pp. 134f. According to Knox, this belief in ongoing, infallible revelation was at the heart of Luther's dispute with Muntzer and the Anabaptists.

³⁹ George H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, p. 133.

besides that the publicans and harlots shall be preferred to the righteous in the Kingdom of Heaven.⁴⁰

Bullinger also noted that these Anabaptists added that “Women did sin in having intercourse with their husbands who were still heathens, but they did not sin in having intercourse with the [Anabaptist] brethren.”⁴¹ All the while these Anabaptists claimed to be sinless, since the soul is not responsible for the sins of the body. Logically, they refused to pray “Forgive us our sins” (Lk 11:4).

Other radical, antinomian Anabaptists include the naked Adamites, “devilers” (who taught universal salvation—even for the Devil), “silent ones” (who had no preaching at their contemplative worship), “priest-murderers,” etc.⁴² The Netherlands’ Adamites (1580) required candidates for admission to appear naked before the congregation to prove that physical desire had no power over them. In 1535 members of an Amsterdam congregation ran through the streets naked (as a prophetic sign?) crying, “Woe, woe, woe, the wrath of God, the wrath of God.”⁴³

Other antinomians

We will briefly mention a few other sixteenth and seventeenth century antinomian groups. The Family of Love (also called Familists) were adherents of a cult that followed the teachings of Hendrik Niclaes (1502–1580). Niclaes’ teaching was similar to that of the Medieval Brethren of the Free Spirit. Niclaes was a German, pantheistic mystic who claimed to receive divine revelations.⁴⁴ These revelations assured him that he had received

⁴⁰ Johann Heinrich Bullinger, “An Wholesome Antidote or Counter-Poison Against the Pestilent Heresy and Sect of the Anabaptists,” cited by George H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, p. 202.

⁴¹ Ronald A. Knox, *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion*, p. 136.

⁴² George H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, p. 675.

⁴³ Herman Haupt, “Adamites,” *SHERK*, 1:37. Ronald A. Knox, *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion*, p. 136.

⁴⁴ Niclaes had been raised Roman Catholic, but he was influenced along mystical lines by his Melchiorite-Anabaptist friend, David Joris, in Amsterdam. See Samuel Rutherford, *A Survey of the Spirituall Antichrist*, pp. 55–68.

the “spirit of the true love of Jesus Christ” and that he was, in fact, an incarnation of Christ and a second messiah. Nicolaes proposed a creedless, unified church ruled by toleration and love that would usher in the new age of love. Indeed, the whole of religion consists in the exercise of love. Theology (even of the divine nature) is irrelevant. Through love, man can become absolutely absorbed in, and identified with, God. Nicolaes regarded himself as the infallible bishop-prophet of this new church. He exercised some influence in Germany, the Low Countries, France, and England from 1540 to 1580. However, his followers flourished the most in England, where they continued during the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I. The English Familists were known for conforming outwardly to any ecclesiastical or civil requirements, and for using ambiguous language to profess the acceptance of any required doctrine. Eventually, the English Familists were either absorbed into the evangelical mysticism of the Society of Friends (i.e., the Quakers), or, formed the blasphemous Antinomian sect called the Ranters.

The English Ranters (or “Sweet Singers”) taught that after Christ’s atonement there is no sin in the church of God, and God sees no sin in his people. Furthermore, nothing is sin but what a man thinks to be sin. Teaching perfectionism, it was only logical for them to view themselves as in a pre-Fall condition. This justified public nudity and having the women in common, so that they might “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth” (Gn 1:28).⁴⁵ Whoever did not believe the Ranters’ doctrine was considered undoubtedly damned.

In Puritan England, like sixteenth century Germany, antinomianism proceeded from the doctrine of justification. It exaggerated the gospel offer, emphasized justification at the expense of sanctification, led to perfectionism (in which the sins of justified persons are denied to be sins in the sight of God), and

⁴⁵ The Munsterite Anabaptists had also cited this Biblical injunction as grounds for their polygamy. Increase in the Anabaptist population was fostered by the Melchiorite Anabaptists’ eschatological teaching that required 144,000 elect saints for the Kingdom of God (Rv 7:14). See George H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, pp. 511f.

taught assurance of salvation apart from growth in sanctification.⁴⁶ English Puritan and Westminster Divine, Thomas Gataker, summarized the teaching of seventeenth century antinomians:

1. That the Moral Law is of no use at all to a believer, nor a rule for him to walk in, nor to examine his life by, and that Christians are free from the mandatory power of it: whence one of them [Antinomians] cried out in the pulpit, “Away with the Law, which cuts off a mans legs and then bids him walk.”
2. That it is as possible for Christ to sin as for a child of God to sin.
3. That the child of God need not nor ought not to ask pardon for sin, and that it is no less than blasphemy for him so to do.
4. That God doth not chasten any of his children for sin, nor is it for the sins of God’s people that the land is punished.
5. That if a man know himself to be in a state of grace, though he be drunk, or commit murder, God sees no sin in him.
6. That when Abraham denied his wife, and in outward appearance seemed to lie in his distrust, lying, dissembling, and equivocating that his wife was his sister, yea, then all his thoughts, words, and deeds were perfectly holy and righteous from all spot of sin in the eyes of God.⁴⁷

Interestingly, Arminian John Wesley wrote in 1774, “The main flood [of Satanic deception] in England seems to be Antinomianism. This has been a greater hindrance to the work of God than any, or all others put together.”⁴⁸

⁴⁶ William Young, “Antinomianism,” *Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed. Edwin H. Palmer, 1:276.

⁴⁷ Thomas Gataker, *Antinomianism Discovered and Confuted*. London, 1652. Cited by A.H. Newman and G. Kawerau, “Antinomianism and Antinomian Controversies,” *SHERK*, 1:198. Similar points are made by Robert Baillie, *Anabaptism, the True Fountain of Independency, Antinomy, Brownism, Familism, and Most of the Other Errors, which for the Time Do Trouble the Church of England* (London: M.F., 1647), pp. 94f.

⁴⁸ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., 14 vols. (1872; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 12:297.

Some groups not commonly labeled antinomian did, in fact, promote antinomianism. For example, hyper-Calvinism is a deterministic or fatalistic system of belief. It denies that mankind has any moral responsibility, while affirming that freedom of choice is illusory. Such a distorted view renders the preaching of the law as a rule of life to be irrelevant, thereby fostering antinomianism. God's sovereign decree will come to pass regardless what man does. Prayer, evangelism, repentance, believing, obedience, etc. are ultimately meaningless. The elect will be saved whether they keep the moral law or not, and the reprobate cannot obey the law. In either case there is no value in preaching the law! Some hyper-Calvinists (e.g., Tobias Crisp and John Saltmarsh) taught that the transgressions of the elect actually became Christ's transgressions and ceased to be theirs. Furthermore, sanctification was viewed as imputed. Others taught that the elect can do nothing displeasing to God and forbidden by his law—even if they go contrary to its statutes! Thus the elect have no need to confess their sins or to grieve for them.⁴⁹

A very significant group that is not typically labeled “antinomian” is Roman Catholicism. Yet, Westminster Divine Anthony Burgess astutely observed:

This [the setting aside of God's law because of religious tradition, referring to Mk 7:6–13] is most remarkably seen in the Church of Rome, who, by the multitude and necessity of observation of their Church precepts and constitutions, make men to break the plain commandments of God. ... Popery is in a great part Antinomianism. And Antichrist he is called “the lawless One” [2 Th 2]: for, is not their doctrine, that the Pope may dispense with the

⁴⁹ Many of these and other such antinomian errors are catalogued by Thomas Edwards (*Gangraena*, 3 parts [London: T.R. & E.M., 1646], Part I, pp. 21f, #'s 66–80; Part II, p. 2, #'s 16–18, 22f; Part III, pp. 9, 14, #'s 17, 37. See also Anthony Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis: Or, A Vindication of the Moral Law and the Covenants, From the Errors of Papists, Arminians, and More Especially, Antinomians*, 2nd ed. (London: James Young, 1647), pp. 278 (as erroneously paginated in the original).

Laws of God,⁵⁰ and that the Pope and Christ have the same Consistory [session], Antinomianism? And in particular, we may instance in their taking away the Second Commandment out of some Catechisms,⁵¹ because it forbiddeth the worshipping of images.⁵²

John Calvin had made a similar observation a century earlier. After citing numerous examples of Roman Catholicism minimizing God's law while exalting its ecclesiastical traditions, Calvin states,

What is it to set at naught God's precept for the sake of their own traditions [Mt 15:3] if it be not this? While commending the observance of God's commandments only coldly and perfunctorily, they nonetheless zealously and busily urge an exact obedience to their own, as if these contained in themselves the whole force of piety? While requiring that only light amends be made for the transgression of the divine law, they punish even the slightest infraction of their decree with no lighter penalty than prison, exile, fire, or sword. While not so harsh and inexorable against those who despise God, they persecute to the extremity their own despisers with an implacable hatred; and they instruct all those whose simplicity they hold captive to see with greater equanimity God's whole law overthrown than a tittle of the precepts of the church (as they call them) violated.⁵³

⁵⁰ In theory, a papal dispensation (i.e., an exemption from a particular law in a specific situation) only applied to ecclesiastical laws (The Canon Law Society of Great Britain, et. al., *The Code of Canon Law* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983], p. 12, canon 85). However, in practice, papal dispensations could be used to set aside the law of God.

⁵¹ The official 1994 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* continues the practice of not listing the Second Commandment. Rather, it is subsumed under the First Commandment and then declared to be nullified after Christ's incarnation (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [Liguori, MO: Liguori, 1994], pp. 516f).

⁵² Anthony Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis*, pp. 275f. Spellings are modernized.

⁵³ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4:10:10.

Jesuit casuists also fostered antinomianism by substituting easily-violated Canon Law for the Mosaic law.⁵⁴

The final example of sixteenth and seventeenth century antinomians we will offer is mystics. Following in the footsteps of the Brethren of the Free Spirit, it was not uncommon for various mystics to assert that, by virtue of their revelations and spiritual experiences, they were subject to no ordinances, whether human or divine.

Roman Catholic Response

The official response of the Roman Catholic Church to sixteenth century Protestant antinomianism came during the sixth session of the Council of Trent (1547). The Tridentine decree and canons that condemned the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone also anathematized everyone holding antinomian teachings.⁵⁵

Some concluding observations

Antinomianism, defined as the heresy of rejecting the moral law as a rule of life for Christians, has reared its ugly head repeatedly throughout the history of the church. It has produced a harvest of rebellion, immorality, and division.

Certain key errors have repeatedly led to antinomianism:

1. Embracing Greek philosophy, especially some form of dualism in which spirit is viewed as good and matter as evil.
2. Failure to maintain the Creator-creature distinction, often by embracing pantheism.

⁵⁴ A.H. Newman and G. Kawerau, "Antinomianism and Antinomian Controversies," SHERK, 1:197.

⁵⁵ Council of Trent, Sixth Session, Chapter 15, in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (SCC), 6th ed., 3 vols. (1931; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 2:106f; Canons 19–22, in SCC, 2:114f.

3. Adapting a hermeneutic of discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments, which always includes the rejection of covenantal continuity.
4. Creating a false antithesis between law and gospel/grace, or between law and love.
5. Over-emphasizing and perverting the doctrine of justification to the neglect of sanctification.
6. Teaching perfectionism.
7. Exalting private revelations above the Scripture.

It is insightful to note that numbers one, three, and four all involve depreciating the Old Testament. R.J. Rushdoony perceptively observes that,

Over the centuries, virtually all heresies have been hostile to the Old Testament, or have decreed that it is now an ended dispensation, or in one way or another have down-graded it in part or in whole. ... Down-grading the Old Testament is a way of re-writing the New, because the meaning of the New is destroyed if the Old Testament is set aside in any fashion. As a result, the “New Testament Christianity” of such heretics winds up being no Christianity at all.⁵⁶

With respect to number three, Biblical covenants have binding terms or stipulations (i.e., law). “Where there is no law, there is no covenant, for a covenant imposes a law on all concerned.... Antinomianism thus is more than covenant-breaking. It is the denial of the covenant and of covenant justice or righteousness. ...The end result is no grace at all. An unrighteous and lawless grace is not grace but sin.”⁵⁷

With respect to number four, if law and grace come from the same God (contra Marcion), then there can be no ultimate contradiction between them. If law and grace are antithetical, then Christians are

⁵⁶ Rousas J. Rushdoony, *The Roots of Reconstruction* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1991), p. 325.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 47f.

saved by lawlessness! Rushdoony notes that Christians have succumbed to several false antinomies:⁵⁸

False Antinomies	True Antinomies
grace vs. law	grace vs. reprobation
	law vs. lawlessness
love vs. law	love vs. hatred
faith vs. works	faith vs. faithlessness/unbelief
	good works vs. evil works

While a detailed refutation of antinomianism is beyond the scope of this paper, giving a few Biblical facts concerning God’s law would be helpful. First of all, the Mosaic Law is God’s law (Ro 7:22, 25; 8:7; 1 Cor 7:19). God describes it as: “perfect” (Ps 19:7); “spiritual” (Ro 7:14); “holy, righteous/just, and good” (Ro 7:12, 16; cf. 1 Tim 1:8); “the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth” (Ro 2:20).

The Mosaic Law gives the legal terms of the covenant that God made with Moses and with Israel. This covenant, like all of God’s covenants with man, is grounded upon God’s grace (Ps 119:29).

The heart of the Mosaic Law is to define, and to inculcate, love for God and one’s neighbor (Dt 6:5; Lv 19:18; Mt 22:37–40; Ro 13:8–10; Gal 5:14; etc.). Obedience to God’s commands is proof of one’s love for God (Jn 14:15, 21–24; 1 Jn 5:2f). Lawlessness produces “lovelessness” (Mt 24:12).

Under the new covenant, God writes his same law on the minds and hearts of his people (Jer 31:31–33; Heb 8:8–10; 10:16).

Saving faith establishes God’s law (Ro 3:31), and it produces obedient works (Ja 2:17–20; Gal 5:6).

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 353.

“Sin is the transgression of the law” (1 Jn 3:4; “lawlessness” NASB, NIV). Christ hates lawlessness (Heb 1:9). Christ will eternally reject the lawless (Mt 7:23; 13:41).

After years of evangelistic work, John Wesley concluded, “The great hindrance to the inward work of God is Antinomianism, wherever it breaks in.”⁵⁹ Of course, God’s work is not limited to “inward work.” Rushdoony adds that antinomians are retreatists who reject the cultural mandate/dominion covenant (Gn 1:26–30).⁶⁰ When the Church, by the power of God’s Spirit, completes her task of discipling the nations (Mt 28:18–20), then those great prophecies concerning God’s just law will be fulfilled:

Now it will come about that In the last days, The mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains, And will be raised above the hills; And all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways, And that we may walk in His paths.” For **the law will go forth from Zion**, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He will judge between the nations, And will render decisions for many peoples; And they will hammer their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they learn war. (Is 2:2–4 // Mi 4:1–3)

“Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one *in whom* My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. ... He will not be disheartened or crushed, Until He has established justice in the earth; And the coastlands will wait expectantly for **His law**.” (Is 42:1, 4; cf. 51:4)

⁵⁹ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 12:456.

⁶⁰ Rousas J. Rushdoony, *The Roots of Reconstruction*, p. 352.

Note: It is the viewpoint of this writer that the non-Reformed branches of Christianity failed to teach that: God is the only Lawgiver (Ja 4:12); God's law is above civil magistrates; and God's law is the only basis on which justice can be established (Heb 2:2; Is 8:20; Dt 4:5–8). Furthermore, Lutheran amillennialists failed to recognize the earthly aspect of God's inaugurated (but not yet consummated) Kingdom. God is the King, his Kingdom includes all the earth, and he rules by his law-word (Is 33:22). Christ is the mediator of this Kingdom, and, after his resurrection, all earthly kings and judges are commanded to submit to him (Mt 18:18–20; Ps 2). I would term any group failing to teach and to apply these Biblical truths "semi-antinomian." Conversely, the Reformed theologians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries normally held that the state's responsibilities included enforcing the Ten Commandments (including the FIRST table prohibiting idolatry and blasphemy) and protecting the church by punishing heretics and schismatics. Obvious examples include: Calvin (especially his Sermons on Dt), Bucer, Beza, Knox, Bullinger, Gillespie, Rutherford, Cranmer, etc. This position is taught by most of the sixteenth and seventeenth century Reformed creeds in their respective sections on the civil magistrate. Philip Schaff (whom we might term "anti-theonomic") acknowledges that

The Protestant divines and princes of the sixteenth century felt it to be their duty to God and to themselves to suppress and punish heresy as well as civil crimes. ... It [theonomic view] had a strong basis in the national endorsement of the Solemn League and Covenant, and triumphed in the Westminster Assembly. It may therefore be called *THE Presbyterian theory of the seventeenth century*.⁶¹

⁶¹ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 7 vols. in 8 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895), vol. 6, pp. 51, 77 (emphasis added).

New Testament Allusions to Antinomianism

Ro 3:8 And why not *say* (as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say), “**Let us do evil that good may come**”? Their condemnation is just. (Cf. vv. 5, 7.)

Ro 3:31 Do we then **nullify the Law through faith**? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.

Ro 6:1 What shall we say then? Are we to **continue in sin that grace might increase**?

Ro 6:15 What then? Shall **we sin because we are not under law but under grace**? May it never be!

Ro 7:7 What shall we say then? Is **the Law sin**? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, “YOU SHALL NOT COVET.”

Ro 7:13 Therefore did that which is good [the Law] become a **cause of death** for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

Ro 9:14 What shall we say then? There is no **injustice with God**, is there? May it never be!

Ro 9:19 You will say to me then, “**Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?**” 20 On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me like this,” will it?

1 Cor 6:12 **All things are lawful for me**, but not all things are profitable. **All things are lawful for me**, but I will not be mastered by anything.

1 Cor 10:23 **All things are lawful**, but not all things are profitable. **All things are lawful**, but not all things edify.

Eph 5:6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Tit 1:15 **To the pure, all things are pure**; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled.

2 Pt 2:18 For speaking out arrogant *words* of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, 19 **promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption**; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved. (cf. 2 Pt 2; Jude)

2 Pt 3:16 as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

Jude 4 For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who **turn the grace of our God into lewdness** and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rv 2:2 ‘I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot endure evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them *to be* false;

Rv 2:6 ‘Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Rv 2:14 ‘But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching

Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit *acts of* immorality. 15 ‘Thus you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

Rv 2:20 ‘But I have *this* against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray, so that they commit *acts of* immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

1 Cor 5:1 It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father’s wife. 2 And **you have become arrogant, and have not mourned instead**, in order that the one who had done this deed might be removed from your midst. 3 For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, 5 *I have decided* to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. 6 Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump *of dough*?

Ja 2:14–26 (faith without works)

Other passages frequently misused by Antinomians

2 Cor 3:6 who also made us adequate *as* servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for **the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life**.

1 Jn 3:9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and **he cannot sin**, because he is born of God.

1 Cor 3:21–22 So then let no one boast in men. For **all things belong to you**, 22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; **all things belong to you**,

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Additional Biblical Worldview Resources by Dr. Robert Fugate

Hard cover books

The Bible: God's Words to You is an 863-page, Reformed, presuppositional treatment of the doctrine of Scripture, including: inspiration, inerrancy, Reformation properties of Scripture, illumination by the Holy Spirit, Old and New Testament canon, apocrypha, and textual criticism. One of the unique features of this book is its presentation of the subject of bibliology from the perspective of the Biblical world- and life- view, along with a presuppositional approach to apologetics. The book teaches from Scripture itself, while still providing abundant, choice citations from the best Reformed and evangelical literature. *The Bible: God's Words to You* includes a glossary, five appendices, and memory verses. One particularly useful appendix surveys the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy throughout church history, offering a litany of carefully-selected, well-referenced citations.

Endorsed by: Kenneth Gary Talbot, Ph.D., Th.D., Ed.D., J.D.; W. Gary Crampton, Ph.D, Th.D.; Rev. Phillip G. Kayser, Ph.D.

Paperback books

Psycho-Heresy: Christianizing Pagan Psychologies. This 6x9-inch, 336-page paperback examines the question, Can psychological counseling be Christian counseling? The first section presents the Biblical worldview—including a Biblical theory of knowledge (i.e., epistemology) and the impossibility of science arriving at truth (since it is based upon an epistemology of empiricism and probabilistic inductive reasoning). The second section presents key areas of systematic theology that are appealed to by Christian integrationist counselors (such as the nature of man, and general and special revelation). Since one of the main gurus of the Christian counseling movement adamantly rejects the gospel of “Lordship salvation” (which requires repentance from sin), a Biblical examination of this topic is also included. On this basis of the Biblical worldview and sound systematic theology, the

third section examines the roots, teachings, claims, and practices of evangelical integrationist counseling (which attempts to synthesize psychology and the Bible). This examination includes pervasive psychological themes, such as: self-esteem; the meeting of psychological “needs”; the gospel as unconditional and undemanding love; inner healing and self-love as the keys to personal transformation; the healing of memories; and freeing from addictions and codependencies.

Endorsed by: Franklin Ed. Payne, M.D.; Rev. Phillip G. Kayser, Ph.D.

Key Principles of Biblical Civil Government: Proclaiming the Lordship of Jesus Christ over the Nations. A 134-page introduction to the subject of civil government, from the perspective of the Biblical worldview. Topics include: What are the jurisdictions of family, church, and state? Can there be a religiously neutral civil government? What is the source of just laws? What are the Biblical qualifications for civil officials? What constitutes a just war? How should Christians resist a tyrannical state? Additional topics include: the idolatry of statism; the relationship between church and state; civil disobedience; eminent domain, etc.

Endorsed by: Hon. Howard Phillips; Lt. Colonel John Eidsmoe, J.D.; Dr. Ted Baehr, J.D.; Jay Grimstead, D.Min.; Rev. Phillip G. Kayser, Ph.D.; Tom Rose; Dan Smithwick; Rev. William O. Einwechter, Th.M.; Rev. Mark R. Rushdoony.

Available in both English and Spanish editions.

God’s Mandate for Biblical Education. Education can only be understood from the perspective of worldviews. *God’s Mandate for Biblical Education* briefly examines the components of worldviews (particularly epistemology), and then presents the Biblical worldview of education. Nine arguments (including the absolute lordship of Jesus Christ and covenant faithfulness) are powerfully presented, demonstrating that Biblically-consistent, comprehensive, Christian education is Biblically-mandated for all subjects of study, for all Christian children. This is followed by the six necessary components of Christian education, i.e., Biblically

directed: teachers, content, goals, standard, method, and motivations. Foundational presuppositions for a Biblical philosophy of history, language, and science are taught. (Most people are surprised to learn that it is philosophically and logically impossible for science to ever arrive at absolute truth!) Many other questions are answered head-on, such as: Can education ever be religiously neutral? What is the Biblical role of the church and the state in the education of children? Is “classical” Christian education Biblical? (The answers may surprise you!) The differences between the Hebrew and Greek models of education are powerfully presented. In summary, this 148-page book does not deal with the well-documented evils in the public schools; neither is it based on the unbiblical philosophy of pragmatism; instead, it provides a hard-hitting ideology of truly Biblical education that is applicable in all cultures, forcing Christians to re-think most contemporary practices. Powerful quotes from Luther, A.A. Hodge, Machen, and many others are included. *God’s Mandate for Biblical Education* makes an excellent gift for pastors and church libraries.

Endorsed by: E. Ray Moore, Th.M.; Bruce N. Shortt, Ph.D., J.D.; Rev. Phillip G. Kayser, Ph.D.; Tom Rose.

God’s Royal Law: Foundation of Moral Order. This 79-page paperback answers the following questions. What are the 8 different lexical definitions of the word “law” in the New Testament? Is God’s law inherently opposed to grace, faith, love, and the Spirit? What different purposes does God’s law serve? What 3 things was God’s law never designed to do? Are the traditional divisions of God’s law (moral, civil, and ceremonial) Biblically justified? How does Christ relate to lawless people? What does the New Testament teach about Old Testament case laws? What is the significance of God writing His law on the hearts of His people in the new covenant?

Booklets

Antinomianism in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: An Illustration of the Consequences of Rejecting God’s Law. This 33-page booklet describes three types of antinomians (i.e., those

rejecting God’s moral law). In these groups we see several similarities with contemporary evangelical Christian thought: a strong rejection of the Old Testament, producing a “New Testament only Christianity”; elements of Greek dualism; charismatics who “follow the Spirit” while rejecting the letter of Scripture; contemplative worship that replaces Bible teaching; pitting God’s law against grace (“all things are lawful”); using the doctrine of grace to foster sexual immorality; no law but love; church tradition trumps God’s law; socialistic communities; sinless perfection; and universal salvation. Ideas have consequences. *Antinomianism in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* poignantly illustrates the consequences of rejecting God’s moral law. Contains a bibliography.

Biblical Imprecations: Christians’ Secret Weapon. One of the perplexing ethical and hermeneutical problems facing Biblical scholars, pastors and intercessors, is the imprecatory Psalms, i.e., those Psalms that call or wish for God’s judgment, calamity or curse upon the enemies of God and God’s covenant people. Is it ever appropriate for Christians to pray Biblical imprecatory prayers? Why or why not? If these prayers are ever appropriate, in what circumstances are they to be used and by whom? The text of the imprecatory Psalms is given in an appendix—for convenient use in prayer. This 56-page booklet contains a bibliography. Endorsed by: Rev. Phillip G. Kayser, Ph.D.; John Eidsmoe, J.D.; Jay Grimstead, D,Min.

A Brief History and Critique of Natural Law Theory — Is Natural Law Sufficient to Govern Society? What is “natural law” and why is it so ambiguous? Is nature normative? Where does the Bible command people to govern their societies by natural law? Why is it always necessary to interpret general revelation by the Bible? Should politically active Protestants adopt Roman Catholic natural theology? Is natural law theory logical? Is natural law practical? What are six consequences of basing civil laws on natural law? This 43-page booklet contains a bibliography.

Modernism and Postmodernism: Their History, Beliefs, Cultural Influence—and How to Refute Them. This 54-page booklet presents a Biblical analysis and critique of two crucial intellectual movements that have successively dominated much thinking in the Western world, from the 17th century to the present. The booklet begins by defining modernism and postmodernism and briefly tracing their historical and philosophical roots to the Renaissance and especially to the Enlightenment. The key beliefs of modernism and postmodernism are clearly and succinctly summarized. Adopting these key beliefs has had a massive, devastating impact on orthodox Christian theology, on Biblical hermeneutics, and on the entire Western culture. The fundamental points of disagreement between Biblical theism, modernism, and postmodernism are explained. The correlation between postmodernism and Emergent churches is also noted. A powerful, presuppositional rebuttal of modernism and postmodernism demonstrates that neither of them has a coherent worldview that can provide a foundation for knowledge and ethics. After ravaging postmodernism, the Biblical theology of language is taught.

Some Continuities and Discontinuities between the Older Testament and the Newer Testament. This 34-page booklet stresses the unity of Scripture and the importance of using the entire Bible. It answers the following questions. How were people saved in the Old Testament? What is the relationship between the Old Testament covenants and the new covenant? Were Old Testament ethics inferior to the ethics of the New Testament? What continues from the Old Testament and what does not continue and why? The hermeneutical question of continuity/discontinuity affects Christian practice in many areas, e.g., church-state relations, civil laws (e.g., capital punishment, abortion), dietary laws, regulations for worship, church polity, keeping the Sabbath, etc. A bibliography is included.

Toward a Theology of Taxation. This 90-page study pioneers the application of God's infallible and sufficient Word to the area of taxation. Many areas are explored: What types of taxes are mentioned in Scripture? Does God disapprove of some types of

tax? What tax did God institute in Old Testament Israel? What does the prophet Samuel's warning against a centralized civil government teach about increased taxation? Is the modern concept of taxation as the vehicle for socialistic revolution really Biblical? In what ways does "Pay to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" limit the civil government? Is a tax revolt Biblical?

Endorsed by: Rev. Phillip G. Kayser, Ph.D.; appendix printed in *Faith for All of Life*.

Booklet authored by Vonne L. Fugate

Ten Commandments: From Tablets of Stone into the Hearts of God's People. This 49-page introduction to the Ten Commandments contains many practical applications, making it an excellent tool for Bible study groups. *Ten Commandments* has received an enthusiastic endorsement from constitutional attorney, John Eidsmoe.

Antinomianism in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries describes three types of antinomians (i.e., those rejecting God’s moral law). In many of these groups we see contemporary evangelical Christian thought:

- a strong rejection of the Old Testament, producing a “New Testament only Christianity”
- elements of Greek dualism
- charismatics who follow the Spirit, not the letter of Scripture
- contemplative worship that replaces Bible teaching
- pitting God’s law against grace (“all things are lawful”)
- using the doctrine of grace to foster sexuality immorality
- no law but love
- church tradition trumps God’s law
- socialistic communities
- sinless perfection
- universal salvation

Ideas have consequences. *Antinomianism in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* poignantly illustrates the consequences of rejecting God’s moral law! Theology is eminently practical.

About the Author

Robert Fugate, Ph.D., M.Div., has written a variety of teaching materials that have been used by pastors and missionaries in over 60 countries. His book, *The Bible: God’s Words to You*, is a complete textbook on the doctrine of Scripture (bibliology). Other books include: *Key Principles of Biblical Civil Government*; *Psycho-Heresy: Christianizing Pagan Psychologies*; and *God’s Mandate for Biblical Education*. Robert co-authored the position paper on the Sanctity of Human Life for the International Church Council Project/Coalition on Revival, as well as contributing to their position papers on God’s Law and on Christian Education.

Robert is the pastor of a church plant in Omaha, Nebraska. He mentors young adults, missionary candidates, and pastors in Biblical worldview, presuppositional apologetics, and systematic theology.

Robert and Vonne (his wife of over forty years) are blessed with four godly children (all of whom they home-schooled) and nine grandchildren.