

ANTINOMIANISM

Daniel Botkin

The New Testament Greek word for "law" is *nomos*. *Nomos* is the Greek word that was used by the translators of the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word *Torah*. Several times in the New Testament, the word *nomos* appears with an *a-* prefix attached to it, making a new word, *anomos*. The *a-* prefix in Greek means "no," "not," or "without." When the *a-* prefix is attached to a Greek word, it gives the word a negative meaning, just like the *a-* prefix does in English words such as *amoral*, *asexual*, *atheist*, etc.

The Greek word *anomos*, therefore, means "without law" or "lawless." Sometimes this word appears in the New Testament in its noun form (*anomia[n]*, "lawlessness"). You may recognize this as the source of our English word *anomian* or, in its more common form, *antinomian*. An antinomian is, according to Webster's, "one who holds that under the gospel dispensation of grace the moral law is of no use or obligation because faith alone is necessary to salvation."

Webster's description of an antinomian reminds me of some preachers I've heard. I don't think I'd want to be an antinomian, considering what the New Testament says about anomians and anomianism. Let's look at a few places where the Bible talks about this.

Yeshua said, "Not everyone that saith unto Me, 'Lord, Lord' shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works?' And then will I profess unto them, 'I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity [*anomian*]" (Mt. 7:21-23).

Here the Son of God describes a multitude of people ("many," He said, not just a small handful of cult mem-

bers) who find themselves excluded from the Kingdom. Who are these people? It is certainly not atheists, Hindus, or Buddhists who are being talked about here. The people being talked about here are people who call Jesus "Lord" and even do good works in His name. These are church people involved in church activities. They expect to inherit eternal life, but are stunned to find themselves excluded from the Kingdom. The Jesus they thought they knew was obviously a counterfeit Christ. And what is the proof that they never really knew Him? They were anomians - "workers of lawlessness" as Stern's *Jewish New Testament* words it; people who "practice lawlessness" according to the *New American Standard Bible*.

Yeshua spoke about anomians again in the parable of the wheat and tares. The tares ("the children of the wicked one") grow together with the wheat ("the children of the kingdom") until harvest time, when the angels are sent forth to "gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity [*anomian*, "lawlessness]" (Mt. 13:41). Throughout the history of Christianity, the wheat and tares have been side by side, and it has often been difficult to tell which is which. But as harvest time draws near, it will become more apparent which people are wheat and which people are tares. The anomians are the tares, Yeshua said. They have been in His Kingdom for a long time, and now He is sending forth His "angels" (the word simply means "messengers," either human or heavenly or both) to rid His Kingdom of antinomianism.

Paul wrote about a "falling away" (*apostasia*, "departure from truth") that was to come. This falling away was not just referring to some event in the distant future. Paul described the falling away as "the mystery of iniquity (*anomias*, 'lawlessness')," and said that this "secret power of lawlessness" (NIV) was "already at work," and that the "Wicked" (*anomos*) would be revealed (2 Thes. 2:7f). Since *anomos* is an adjective, many

translators provide a noun and render this as "the Wicked One" or "the Lawless One," having in mind an end-time Anti-Christ figure. While it is possible that there may be some reference here to the Anti-Christ, the word *anomos* may simply be referring to the lawless *theology* (i.e., antinomianism) which caused the Church to depart from the Torah and go into apostasy. The error of antinomianism, the "secret power of lawlessness," is being exposed in our generation. Many Christians are waking up and returning to Torah. The secret power of lawlessness is no longer a secret to these people. When the secret is out, lawlessness loses its power and its grip over these people.

The root of the Church's apostasy has been her rejection of the Torah. Perhaps it would be fairer and more accurate to say that the Church rejected those elements of the Torah that seemed too Jewish" for her. The transgression of any of the Law is wrong, though, because "sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). When we violate God's Torah, we sin.

Is there any hope for people who are a part of a Church that has been apostate for most of her history? Deliverance from the spirit of lawlessness comes by the grace of God, but it is a grace that teaches us to honor God's Torah, not a grace that teaches us to be antinomians:

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world: Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity (*anomias*, 'lawlessness'), and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:11-14).

A grace which does not teach us to honor God's Torah is not the grace of God, and a savior who does not redeem us from antinomianism is not the true Savior, but a counterfeit Christ who cannot save.