

Becoming Human Again: a Theology of Sanctification
Lesson 8: The Imitatio Christi & the Moral Law of God

- I. Antinomianism
 - A. Definition
 - B. “The antinomian controversy(s)”
- II. The *Imitatio Christi* has invited antinomian formulations of the Christian life, all of which are misleading and hazardous half-truths. For example:
 - A. “Christ is our standard, not the law of God; our ethics are *Personal* (being conformed to the personal pattern of Christ himself), not *Legal* (conformed to cold, impersonal, abstract, static laws)”
 - B. “True righteousness does not consist in *conformity to law* but in virtuous *Christlike character*, in virtuous dispositions of the soul.”
 - C. “The yoke of following Christ is “easy and light,” in contrast to obeying the law”
 - D. “Following Christ is not about “rules” but a *relationship*; not about do this, don’t do that, but about knowing Him, loving Him, walking with Him
 - E. “The law has been replaced by *love*, which is the essence of imitating Christ”
 - F. “We walk with Christ by *grace*, not by law, which is a ministry of condemnation and death”
 - G. “We are to be led by the *Spirit* of Christ, not the law”
- III. Antinomian half-truths get reinforced by understandable fears of legalism, moralism, pharisaicalism, and so forth. Among these fears, the most common start like this: “By urging sanctification through obedience to the moral law, aren’t we...
 - A. ...Inspiring legalism, by positioning Christians for a slide to self-justification through works-righteousness”?

- B. ...Inspiring moralism, by throwing men back upon their own strength, rather than upon the Spirit of Christ within them?
 - C. ...Setting Christians up for defeatism and despair in the case of failure, or triumphalism and pride for their successes?
 - D. ...Inspiring a life weighted down by the pharisaic multiplication of rules?
 - E. ...Inspiring outward conformity rather than authentic inward piety?
 - F. ...Inspiring obedience motivated by the fear of punishment or by the pursuit of personal reward?
- IV. In reply to antinomianism, we start by observing that none of these claims or concerns prevented the Reformers from affirming the moral law as the Christian's "rule of life" and as an essential means to their sanctification
- A. WCF, ch.19, 5
 - B. Heidelberg, Lord's Day 44, Q.115
- V. The fundamental reason is found in the very *definition* of moral law, which makes it *impossible* to conceive of the imitation of Christ *as anything but* obedience to the moral law.
- A. The moral law according to the *Shorter Catechism*, Q.42
 - B. The moral law according to the *Larger Catechism*, Q.93
- VI. The abiding validity of the moral law is confirmed by scripture, first and foremost in Christ
- A. The pre-incarnate Son is the very source of moral law
 - B. Who then becomes the incarnation of the moral law
 - C. And who, by commanding us to imitate Him, enjoins us to fulfill the moral law

VII. The apostles and the moral law

A. John

B. Paul:

C. Peter

D. James:

E. The moral law is refracted throughout the various apostolic exhortations: