

Conclusion

Those of us who disagree with Calvin and his third use of the law are not necessarily lawless and antinomian. We are not necessarily heretics because we don't always agree with the Genevan Reformer, great though he was. He is not our pope! Nor must he be turned into one! Nor have we committed the unforgivable sin if we do not always go along with the Westminster Confession, the Savoy Declaration, or the 1689 Particular Baptist Confession, or whatever. The fact is, some of us cannot allow any man-made standard to set the agenda and rule the roost; that role is reserved for Scripture alone. Saying such things does not automatically turn us into heretics, you know! To judge by some comments, however, you could be forgiven for thinking it!

I say it again: a man can honestly disagree with the Reformed way of sanctification – by the whip of the law applied to lazy asses – and still be a godly man in Christ, a man ruled by Scripture alone, and who, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, is seeking to live his life to the glory of God in obedience to his written word.

Let me allow William Gadsby to spell it out.¹ He was thought by some to be an antinomian – and still is. As for that, peruse his works, reader, and see for yourself. The fact is, I could well have included Gadsby in this book, but he belongs to a later century. In any case, I quoted him extensively in my *Christ is All*. But I am glad to give him the last word here:

They are quite mistaken... who suppose we are enemies to Christian obedience. We consider it incumbent upon us to recommend it, and

¹ On the numbering of the pages in Gadsby's *Works*, note that after the Preface, there is *A Memoir* with page numbers 7-144. Then follows a Preface followed by the *Works* with page numbers 5-315. I have quoted this volume as Gadsby: *Works* with page numbers, but not indicated the section. The works in question are: *The Gospel the Believer's Rule of Conduct, being A Few Remarks upon a Letter Written by Gaius...*; *The Present State of Religion; or, What are the People Miscalled Antinomians?*; *The Perfect Law of Liberty; or, The Glory of God Revealed in the Gospel* – all in *The Works of the Late Mr William Gadsby, Manchester, in Two Volumes*, Vol.1, London, 1851, the 1870 edition.

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enforce the necessity of it as a proof of union to Christ... The advocates for the believer's complete deliverance from the law of works are not enemies to Christian obedience, as is generally insinuated by their opponents.²

Gadsby, justly resenting being falsely accused of antinomianism, responded by spelling out what these so-called antinomians believe. They:

Believe that when the poor sinner has become dead to the law by the body of Christ, he is married to Jesus, and Jesus and he are evidently become one; so that Christ is the bridegroom, and the sinner is his bride; and, as the spouse of Christ, she is to receive all she needs at the hands of Christ, and live wholly dependent upon him: 'For it has pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell' (Col. 1:19); 'And out of his fullness have we all received, and grace for grace' (John 1:16); 'Who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption' (1 Cor. 1:30). So that the church rejoices because they are [*sic*] complete in him, (Col. 2:10), and that with him they have all things; for 'all things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's' (1 Cor. 3:22-23)... They also believe that the soul that is married to Christ is dead to the law (Rom. 7:4), and that Jesus, as King in Zion, rules them by his own law, not with the rod of his wrath (Lam. 3:1), nor a rod of iron; but with the rod of his strength sent out of Zion (Ps. 20:2), called the law of faith, love, kindness, and the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:2)...³

It is allowed on all hands than an antinomian is one who is against the law; but to me it appears impossible that a man can be against the law [when he] allows it all the power and authority that it ever possessed... The apostle, when writing to the Romans (Rom. 3:19), observes: 'Whatsoever the law says, it says to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world become guilty before God'; 'The law entered that the offence might abound' (Rom. 5:10); and 'that sin by the commandment might appear exceeding sinful' (Rom. 7:13). Now from this account it appears that the design of the law is to bring the sinner in guilty before God, and to justify Jehovah in his righteous sentence of condemnation; while it stops the sinner's mouth and makes him speechless...⁴

² Gadsby: *Works* pp31-32.

³ Gadsby: *Works* pp61-62.

⁴ Gadsby: *Works* p68. Gadsby was getting close to the Reformed view of preparationism. As I have made clear, this is not my stance.

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They believe that the law of works can never be altered, but must for ever stand a just and holy law, with all its authority, in the very sense that God gave it; and that all who are under it, are under its curse. They also believe that Jesus, the great head of the church, was made under the law, and that cursed him as the representative of his people. But he has fulfilled it, and made it honourable, and given it all that it could require, in every sense, and made them for ever free who believe in him; for if the Son makes them free, they are free indeed; and ‘the law of the Spirit of life has made them free from the law of sin and death’ (Rom. 8:2). Now they do not wish to alter the law, nor strip it of its authority; but to give it its just due, and by faith in Jesus establish it, thus using the law lawfully, and not making it into a nose of wax, to turn it just which way they please to suit their own purpose. No, they dare not trifle with God’s holy law.⁵

And the man who can write like this, so say the Reformed, is the sort of person who is an antinomian! Hmm!

The believer must be sanctified. He will be sanctified – it is an inevitable corollary of justification. He must obey the rule he is under. The question is, of course, what is this rule? The Reformed say it is the law of Moses; or, more precisely, the so-called moral law; more precisely still, the ten commandments. Is it?

Gadsby:

The point then is, what is the rule of this obedience?... The whole will of God in Christ Jesus, as King in Zion and head of the church, is the rule, the whole rule, and the only rule of this obedience. On this ground I profess to stand; on this ground I rejoice to stand; and on this ground I must from conscience stand, until [someone is] able to prove that this ground is not good; or unless God in some other way convince me that I am in error.⁶

Gadsby, it goes without saying, included in this rule the teaching of the apostles:

Whatever Christ and his apostles enjoin upon the church is a branch of this rule, and is the law of Christ. The rule I contend for is all comprised in one blessed code of laws, peculiar to the church of the living God, under the gospel dispensation. Nor does this rule ever leave me at a perplexing uncertainty how to judge of my own conduct, or the conduct of other professors with whom I am connected... The

⁵ Gadsby: *Works* pp69-70.

⁶ Gadsby: *Works* p31. See also p37ff.

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matter is soon decided. [If] it is a part of conduct contrary to the law of Christ, [then] as such I treat it.⁷

Gadsby was asked ‘what law it is that’ he claimed ‘the believer is in no sense under?’ His reply was unequivocal:

The law given to Moses on Mount Sinai, commonly called the moral law, or the ten commandments, recorded in Exodus 20, and hinted at, with its curses annexed to it in Deuteronomy 27. This is the law I intend, and do venture to say that the believer in Christ is in no sense whatever under it;⁸ so that it is not a rule of life to that man who is led by the Spirit.⁹

So said William Gadsby.¹⁰

‘This is all very well! But if I go down your route (*my route?*), they will call me an antinomian’. So they will, so they will. But remember that the Jews called Jesus a Samaritan (John 8:48), stigmatising him as much as they could. And to get the full sting in the word, bear in mind that the ‘expert in the law’ could not bring himself even to pronounce it (Luke 10:25-37, especially verse 37, NIV). Clearly, the thought that both a priest and a Levite had failed – where a Samaritan had succeeded – was too much for him to stomach. Jesus, of course, deliberately chose ‘Samaritan’ (see also Luke 17:16; John 4:9,39-40), to make his point. Indeed, not content with calling Christ a Samaritan, the Jews wrote him off as ‘raving mad’ (John 8:48; 10:20, NIV), and ‘demon-possessed’ (John 7:20; 8:52; 10:21, NIV) – as they did John the Baptist (Matt. 11:18). The fact is, they heaped a catalogue of invective on Christ (Matt. 11:19). So, you see, to be given a pejorative nickname puts you in the same class as your Saviour!

⁷ Gadsby: *Works* p35.

⁸ As I explained in my *Christ*, while the believer is not under the law, he uses it – as part of John 17:17 and 2 Tim. 3:15-16 – in a biblical way.

⁹ Gadsby: *Works* p72.

¹⁰ All that I have quoted proves beyond a glimmer of a doubt that Gadsby did not ignore holiness of life, did not preach against it, or was an antinomian. Far from it. He constantly and repeatedly demanded godliness, as defined by the law of Christ, as evidence and fruit of grace. See Gadsby: *Works* pp77-80,156-159,224,252-254. See p294 where he quoted Gill.

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Paul was similarly accused of madness (Acts 26:24). And they also called him the equivalent of an antinomian (Rom. 3:8; 6:1,15)! In fact, as I explained in my Introduction, a good case can be made for saying that the real fault is *not* to be called by some such negative nickname.

And so we come to the end of my book. But, reader, I hope it is not the end of the matter. You have a choice. You can reject the teaching you have found here. Or you can take what you have learned, seek to apply it, and live the rest of your life rejoicing in the sense of your glorious freedom in Christ, and using that freedom to magnify God in your works day by day. All I ask is that you prove these things, one way or the other, by looking to God to guide you by his Spirit. Yes, of course, consult able teachers and their writings. But above all, make sure that it is Scripture that you follow. Make your decision in accordance with what God shows you out of his word.

And finally, Gadsby, in this hymn, expresses my heart in this matter. Remember: *Christ is All*. Reader, I hope these words express your heart also:

*Immortal honours rest on Jesus' head;
My God, my portion, and my living bread;
In him I live, upon him cast my care;
He saves from death, destruction, and despair.*

*He is my refuge in each deep distress;
The Lord my strength and glorious righteousness;
Through floods and flames he leads me safely on,
And daily makes his sovereign goodness known.*

*My every need he richly will supply;
Nor will his mercy ever let me die;
In him there dwells a treasure all divine,
And matchless grace has made that treasure mine.*

*O that my soul could love and praise him more,
His beauties trace, his majesty adore;
Live near his heart, upon his bosom lean;
Obey his voice, and all his will esteem.¹¹*

¹¹ Gadsby's Hymns number 667; Gospel Hymns number 460.