

## Is The Church of Christ Too Dogmatic?

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The world has ever been critical of those who make up the New Testament church as being too dogmatic. As commonly used, the word means, "positive in manner or utterance." Present usage of the word also implies that when one is dogmatic, he contends that the proposition he is upholding is true and that all others contrary to his cannot be true. When one, consequently, makes a positive assertion as if to say, "This admits of no question or doubt," that person is being dogmatic. Carried to its conclusion, dogmatism just says, "It just cannot be any other way."

Many have been known to say, "I wouldn't be so narrow-minded and dogmatic about what I believe in religion as to indict all others as erroneous."

Let us study the word of God and discover the truth on this subject. Does God want people to be dogmatic? The following propositions are submitted for your consideration.

### I. GOD IS DOGMATIC!

God is, was, and will ever be dogmatic in every statement of fact, every precept, and every promise. How could He be otherwise and remain the infallible and true God, the Father of our spirits? To say that God is not positive and absolute, to say that there is repeal from any of his statutes, irrespective of their nature, is but to limit the righteousness, omnipotence, and omniscience of Jehovah God. To even hint that God may be wrong is outright infidelity. God says what He means, means what He says, does not deal in "maybe-sos," demands absolute submission to His will, tolerates no quibbling on man's part, and respects no other way than His own. He blesses those who comply with His exacting commands; He punishes him who misrepresents, adds to, diminishes from, or blatantly disobeys his laws. In other words, God represents the absolute in being dogmatic. When He says something, it's just that way and can't be any other way.

For example, when God's word declares that man was created from the dust of the earth and that woman was taken from his side, the declaration is positive. It does not allow for the event's having taken place any other way. Man may disbelieve, and indeed, many do, but that's what God says about it! One must accept or reject the account. In telling Moses how the tabernacle was to be built, God again was dogmatic, wanting everything to be exactly "according to the pattern." (Ex. 25:40.) The same is true in His descriptions of the kind of offerings to be made, etc. God meant for things to be done just as He commanded them. Definitely God is dogmatic!

### II. JESUS CHRIST WAS DOGMATIC!

Since Christ was none other than God in the flesh, he could not be any different from God. Many statements made by Jesus would be shocking to the modesty of some falsely pious religionists who are afraid to make definite, positive statements today for fear someone's feelings will be hurt. There never lived a character with more sympathy and concern for humanity than our Lord. Yet he spared no man's feelings when the occasion demanded "straight talk." Matthew 23 furnishes sufficient proof of Jesus' positive tirade against the hypocrisy, blindness, and ignorance of the Pharisees.

Let us, however, notice one of the "milder" statements of Jesus. It is a clearcut, forthright declarative sentence. It pertains to the salvation of man's soul. Hear Christ testify: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mk. 16:16.) Does Jesus mean every word of the sentence? Who would dare say that he does not? Then who would dare say the conditions laid down here are unnecessary? Does Jesus even hint in this passage that there are other possible ways of being saved? But the religious world today rebukes Christians for being dogmatic about baptism. Let us look at the true picture: Jesus said belief is connected with man's salvation. So do I as a Christian. Is that dogmatism? Jesus says, baptism is connected somehow with salvation. So do I as a Christian. But, Jesus puts both belief and baptism before salvation. So do I as a Christian! Is that where you put them? Am I too dogmatic in doing the very thing Jesus did? If you say, "Yes," you reject Jesus himself. If you say, "No,"

then why not teach it that way?

### III. THE APOSTLES OF CHRIST WERE DOGMATIC!

Just a few quotations will quickly set at ease any doubts you may be entertaining with reference to the apostles and their teaching being dogmatic. With unanimity almost, the religious world proclaims that salvation is in Christ. They may even get dogmatic about it. Can one afford to? Certainly so, when the Apostle Paul said it was the truth. (Eph. 1:7.) But why won't those same individuals be just as emphatic in stating how one gets into Christ where such salvation is to be found. The very apostle sectarian preachers quote to prove the truth of the above proposition, also is dogmatic in telling us how the transition from the outside of Christ to the inside is made. Well, what is it? Let Paul answer: "Know ye not that so many of us were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death?" (Rom. 6:3.) Are there other ways of getting into him? You must admit that this is one way. Paul says so. Are there others? No, friends, it is not I, nor my brethren, who am dogmatic in the matter of baptism. It is the Christ and his inspired apostles.

It is also agreed by all religious people that without a reconciliation with God, the sinner can never be saved. Since the Bible teaches such, any person can be dogmatic about that subject. Everybody believes this. But I am just as dogmatic in declaring that the sinner cannot be saved outside the church of the New Testament! Why? Simply because the word of God through the Apostle Paul says reconciliation is in the one body. (Eph. 2:16.) If that's where reconciliation is, and Paul says it is, then how could one possibly be reconciled outside the body? But you say, "That didn't say the church!" Yes it did! The "body" is the church! (Read Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22.) Therefore, reconciliation is in the church. I get very dogmatic in teaching that to the world. Yet, it is not I, but the apostle of the Lord Jesus.

Often times I get so dogmatic as to say there is but one church spoken of in God's word. And furthermore, that if people are ever to be saved, it will be in the one church. Further, I am so dogmatic that I do not think one church to be just as good as another. But, my friends, the reason one can afford to take such a stand is because that is the stand of an inspired man. It is God's stand on the matter. In Eph. 4:4, Paul states simply and emphatically, "There is one body." I believe that to be true. But again, the body is the church. (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22.) Paraphrasing the expression, then, "There is one church." If not, why not? The entire tenor of the word of God concerning the church reflects its unity and oneness. Jesus prayed that all who believed on him might be one. (Jno. 17:20, 21.) Paul plead with Christians at Corinth to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and same judgment" and also that "there be no divisions among you." (1 Cor. 1:10.) Is one being too dogmatic, then, in teaching what the apostles taught. You can decide for yourself.

### IV. THE APOSTLES TAUGHT OTHERS TO BE DOGMATIC

The charge was given by one of the apostles to Timothy, "Preach the word." (2 Tim. 4:2.) The charge is dogmatic because it is both inclusive and exclusive. Evidently Timothy is to include in his preaching all that "the word" includes, and to exclude all that the word omits. Paul could afford to make such a charge, for he knew that God's word is sufficient for all man's needs. (See his argument in 2 Tim. 3:16, 17.) It was he who said, "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation." That settles the case. Nothing else will perform the task of soul-saving. No book reviews, political speeches, dramas, nor such like constitute God's power to save. I am most dogmatic in opposing such practices. When preachers declare "the whole counsel of God," they have no time for anything else.

Yes, the members of the New Testament church are dogmatic. They are keeping good company when they so act. It is far better to have such a reputation and be associated with God, Christ, the Apostles, and holy men of New Testament times than to assume the air of modernism and broad-mindedness. There is a possibility that the person who is too "broad" will not fit into the "straight and narrow way." All men can afford to be just as narrowminded and dogmatic as God's word. In fact, they must be or be lost.