

One who practices pure religion soon discovers it is more rewarding to lift a man up than to hold him down.

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Dogma and Love

Can they be reconciled?

What is dogma?

- **Definition:** A belief or set of beliefs that is accepted by the members of a group



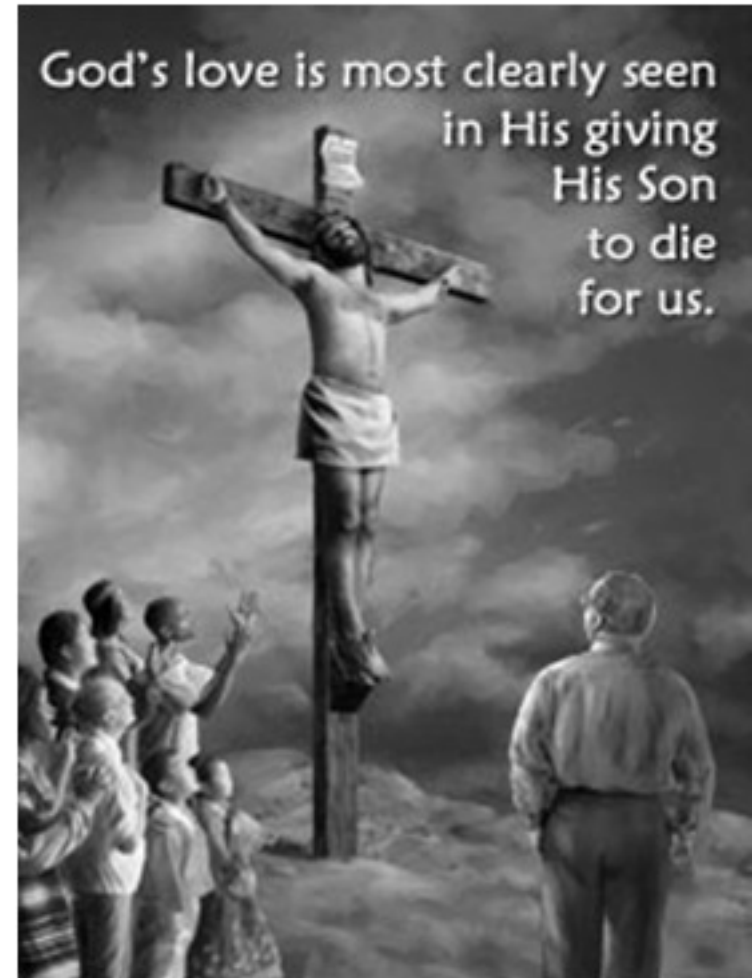
Dogma example

- **1 Corinthians 6:9-10**

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

What is agape love?

- **John 3:16**
For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
- Complete self sacrifice for the sake of another regardless of merit



Dogma and love

- **Psalm 119:158**

I see the treacherous, and am disgusted, Because they do not keep Your word.

- **John 13:35**

By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.



Love asks...

- What can I do/say to save this person?
- How should I treat this person to help their salvation?
- What does this person need to be saved?
- The way we express love, depends on what we believe is true (dogma)
- The answers might be harsh or gentle
- Imagine saving someone from drowning



Feed the body or the soul?

- Feeding the poor – based on the belief that food is nourishing and essential
- What then nourishes the soul?
- Love is based on dogma
- Example: Euthanasia – Is killing a sick person that wants to die good or bad?

Adulteress woman (John 8:3-12)

- Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?"... But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."

Adulteress woman (John 8:3-12)

- ...Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord."

“Sinner” of Corinth

- **1 Corinthians 5:4-5**

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

- **2 Corinthians 2:10**

Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ,

St. Macarius

- In conversation with Macarius, [Theopemptus] was ashamed to confess his impure thoughts, and even denied that they tempted him. Macarius said: "How many years I have labored in asceticism, and I, an old man, am troubled by the spirit of fornication." And Theopemptus replied: "Believe me, Abba, I am likewise troubled."



St. Macarius

- The elder spoke also of other thoughts, as if they tempted him, and in this fashion brought the monk to complete avowal. Then, having given him instruction on the battle with thoughts and on fasting, he left him. And from that time this brother labored in asceticism more than others.

Imbalance: Judgment



(1) Salvation by legalism

- Salvation by works
- Too much focus on the commands, and not enough emphasis on the mercy of God to all of us who are unable to fulfill the commands
- Pride (Pharisee vs. Tax collector)
- Jews travelled with door frame
- “Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where he found bread.” D.T. Niles

(2) Salvation by knowledge

- Even worse than legalism
- Saved by knowing lots of religious facts, stories, rites, history, etc.
- **1 Corinthians 8:1**
...We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know.





(3) Salvation by social/ethnic clique

- Salvation by being part of the “church” club
- Knowing a holy person makes me holy too
- Judging the cultural differences in others
- Not differentiating between Tradition and tradition

Imbalance: “Love” (Excessive Tolerance)

Both tolerance and respect
are empty virtues until we
actually understand
whatever it is we are
supposed to be tolerating
or respecting.

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(1) Not believing the Word of God

- What if I don't really believe the dogma?
- Taking the commandment of God lightly and focusing only on His mercy
- It's not a sin, but an alternative lifestyle
- **Psalm 119:11**
Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.

(2) Discomfort confronting others

- **Proverbs 27:5**
Open rebuke is better than
love carefully concealed.
- Direct confrontation is
difficult, but often not the
only way
- St. Arsenius example



(3) Lack of responsibility

- **Proverbs 27:17**

As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.

- **James 5:19-20**

Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

(4) Self love

- Caring more about losing a relationship with another person than helping to save that person
- Do we really only care about ourselves?
- Deception: We want to maintain the relationship so that we can help them “eventually”

(5) Hypocrisy

- I feel like a hypocrite telling others to obey the Word of God because I am deep in sin
- The blind leading the blind
- **Titus 1:16**
They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.
- **1 John 5:2-3**
By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.

Love washes away sin

- **1 Corinthians 6:9-11**

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters...will inherit the kingdom of God...**And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.**



Conclusion

- Dogma and love are complimentary, not contradictory
- True dogma demands love of neighbor
- True love teaches dogma through words and actions for the salvation of others