

Unravelling the source and course of Dogma

Dogma is a concept that is associated most especially with organizations whose fundamental or governing tenets are not readily evident. This absence of ready evidence makes these tenets vulnerable to different interpretations, which can lead to differences of opinion as to which is correct one. The result, as history shows, is that a struggle soon ensues within the organization to establish/enforce one of the competing interpretations as approved. A famous example is the Nicaean creed which established the articles of faith to govern the doctrines of Christianity.

These struggles seldom occur without negative outcomes or suffering for those who lost, or hold views contrary to what becomes accepted as orthodox i.e., what has been imposed as the only right or true interpretation by the powers that be.

The most rigid form of orthodoxy is clearly evident in the history of ALL religious movements, and because our focus, as always, is on how our understanding and actions affect our Spiritual development, we shall focus on religious dogma in this write up.

History shows that many factors go into the shaping of dogma.

But there are some key concepts that determine whether the dogma infuses or stifles Spiritual awakening and development. Thus, dogma in itself is not bad, it is the way in which it is administered or imposed that can be detrimental to the development of the human Spirit.

Part 1 of this video series dealt at length with the concepts of Respect and Submission, which we will see play vital role in the administration of dogma, i.e.; how it shapes attitudes and thinking within its membership, and how these can in turn promote or stifle Spiritual development.

In this video, we will focus on how the members themselves consciously or unconsciously promote and strengthen dogma.

Perhaps the point being made here is best conveyed by giving concrete example of practices and beliefs from established religious organizations.

This is done not to pass judgement, but to help demonstrate a point that might not be so easily or clearly conveyed if discussed from a philosophical perspective only.

The first example is the dogmatic approach to **Faith versus Reason, or Intuition versus Intellect**. Regardless of the words used, this approach suggests a clear and irreconcilable difference between the two.

Yet, there is no reason why both can not exist in harmony within an individual or in society. Our video on Living and Being Alive goes in a detailed exploration of this idea. So, we will only summarize the salient point as follows:

- 1 - A human being is endowed with both Intuition for the necessary Spiritual perception that can lead to Spiritual Growth through the experiences of Life.
- 2 A human being is also endowed with the Intellect to execute the prompting of the Spirit's perceptions into deeds from which the Spirit can experience, learn and grow.

The video also explores how we arrived to the stage today where there is this dichotomy between Intuition (Faith) and Reason (Intellect), and shows that both are required for the full development of the Spirit's potentials in accordance with the Laws of Creation.

But this apparent dichotomy has become one of the fundamental tenets of almost all Spiritual dogma, namely the exclusion of Reason or intellect from matters of Faith. Interestingly, this is only done on a selective basis. Because modern leaders use arguments, obviously the product or reasoning/intellect, to support their pronouncement to the congregation.

However, this enforcement has not succeeded in totally squashing the Spirit's desire for logic even in articles of Faith. Many have simply given up trying to fight against the powers that be and so, remain silent.

Another feature of the dogmatic approach is how words are used.

Dogma tends to encourage the **use of passionate words or language** in discussions of any subject appertaining to Faith. For example, members will use vague terms designed to engender emotional feelings of upliftment or dread, regardless of whether those emotions are real, or applicable to the discussion. The language is usually accompanied by a demeanor, or tone to suggest authority, or piety, mixed with projected humility. Any member who seeks clarification, or is unable to develop the desired demeanor is immediately branded as spiritually immature, or as intransigent and rebellious.

When it involves anything that is seen as having a bearing on their Faith, even clearly obvious that would be accepted in other aspects of their being is automatically subjected to this approach. Thus, the intellect or reason that is used in all other areas of their other earthly activities is suddenly discarded. For example, a dogmatic believer will not seek for a logical explanation of how a dead physical body could rise and float into heaven, and why, the occupant of that body did not equally descend from heaven in the same ready-made body?

Another mark of dogma is unquestioned deference to **a leader solely because of their believed spiritual stature**. The leader is therewith accorded a cloak of omnipotence and infallibility, even

in the face of their obvious failures and shortcomings. In such instances, a dogmatic believer will automatically shut out any reasoning in the belief that they are thereby being true and loyal to the leader.

Yet, a simple review of the tenets of their teaching would show that this attitude is wrong. The pure Spiritual Messages clearly stresses the Laws of Creation as the only standard by which to measure and evaluate all thoughts and actions. What such believers consider loyalty is therefore idolatry in the sense of the word in that they are making their leader their new idol of worship.

This leads us to another concept that fosters wrong dogma.

Here we point to **Rigidity** which is inflexibility to expand our concepts and ideas or to accommodate change. Thus, a rigid doctrine or person is literally stuck in a world view.

The irony too is that the same organization and its members are not likely to recognize the tenets of their own religion when it is presented in different words or context. For example, even though the Abrahamic religions stem from the same roots, and founded on the same tenets (The 10 commandment), each appears unable to recognize the truth in the other's, simply because over the years they have evolved dogmas woven around interpretations and rituals, rather than focusing on the Spirit of their same basic and essential Message.

We see the same playing out in today's modern missions or attempts to send messages to help the human Spirit awaken to urgent Spiritual awareness and recognition.

Also, rigidity in understanding makes it impossible for the dogmatic believer to see manifestation of the basic laws that form the foundation of their beliefs when it is presented out of context. For example, a dogmatic person cannot associate the laws governing the cosmos and physical sciences to any of the tenets of their teachings. Thus, they can see no relationship between Spiritual Law of Sowing and Reaping in its material manifestation in the Law of Action and Reaction. And therefore, miss the opportunity to learn Spiritual lessons by observing the operation of physical system,

As in the past, the new religious organizations that are forming around new messages are weaving dogma with rigid interpretations and the establishment of rituals to keep members in check. And the new members, like all members through out history, are using the same tactics of high-sounding words, uttered with deep passion, accompanied by contrived humility to serve as their weapon or shield against anyone who dares to disturb their comfortable embrace of dogma.

Among other things, rigidity in the way faith is promoted can affect its spread and as well as influence on its members. For example, a forceful or dictatorial approach to the promotion of doctrine leads to emphasis on orthodoxy and ritual, and less on the spirit of the Message. Sometimes the leaders use veiled threats to keep members in check.

This approach accounts for the disappearance of many ancient religions that once held sway over large communities. For example, the powerful Priesthoods of the ancient world quickly collapsed when their members, who were laboring in silent submission to their authoritarian tactics, quickly embraced new faiths that promised greater Spiritual freedom. For example, many do not appreciate that the spread of Christianity in the Americas or Africa was not facilitated by military conquest, but by the desire for freedom from the yoke of tyrannical priests. For example, the threat and fear of being selected for the next sacrificial offering kept many who would have asked questions from seeking clarification and to remain silent.

This last example brings us back to the concepts of Respect and Submission when it comes to enforcing dogma.

Clearly enforced Submission promotes dogma, because it does not allow for any views that are contrary to dogma, even if these views are intended to help the organization adapt to changing times and approaches.

The inability to entertain contrary or new views is another sign of lack of respect. The thinking being that contrary views have nothing to offer.

Thus, dogma has no room for give and take as demanded by the Law of Balance in human relationships and activities. Neither does it embrace the Law of Love embodied in the concept of Respect, that calls for the support and encouragement of every individual Spiritual growth.

It must be emphasized that this Law does not mean accepting or abiding errant views or philosophies that contradict or distort the Laws of Creation. However, it does not call for anyone to force another into submission.

The Laws of Creation have their own built-in corrective measures through which the errant person will learn from their own experience.

A responsible, nondogmatic approach would suggest first trying to see the other person's perspective, and then try to lead them, from their level gradually into higher recognitions. It is only after this approach has failed that a leader can consider excluding an errant one, who remains intransigent and wishes to enforce their own view on the rest of the congregation.

This approach entails respect and avoids imposition. And focus will be directed at helping a fellow human Spirit to come to their own recognitions and acceptance of the Laws of Creation so that they can begin their own individual journey which, they will pursue in their own way within the scope of the Laws of Creation. In other words, free of any interpretation imposed by dogma.