

"That's Just Church of Christ Doctrine!"

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I am not easily given to being upset when someone calls into question the things which I as a preacher am attempting to disseminate. A man who intends to devote his life to preaching is disposed to arrange his dispositions and inclinations so that when that which he teaches is called into question he does not “fly off the handle” or otherwise conduct himself in a manner as would lay him open to criticism. However, there is one matter which I have trouble understanding, and about which I can easily become perturbed. It seems strange to me that when men disagree there is immediately a personal attack forthcoming; and more often than not, a charge in regard to teaching which is obviously calculated to prejudice, and which estranges people from truth rather than promoting it.

One example of this is the denominational effort to dismiss our calls for scriptural precedent with the charge that “that’s just Church of Christ doctrine.” This statement, and others like it, is designed not to ascertain and promote truth, but to incite prejudice against what is being taught. There is no religious belief that is so un-important as to be undeserving of our attention. Any genuine truth welcomes examination and has nothing to fear from such.

Demand for absolute authority is not “Church of Christ doctrine.” People have not the inherent capability to save themselves (Jeremiah 10:23; Romans 3:23), and therefore must have some edict for God to which to appeal for their salvation. I openly and unashamedly affirm that the only complete, perfect, and absolute law came from the only complete, perfect, and absolute source—God. That means that any other source of authority is incomplete, imperfect, and relative; and will cause its adherents to be lost. Creeds of human origin will cause one who subscribes to them to be lost. That’s not just “Church of Christ doctrine,” either. See II Timothy 3:16-17, and I Peter 4:11.

The distinctive nature of the church is not just “Church of Christ doctrine.” The church of Christ did not originate the affirmation that there is only one church. The fact that there is one church is as logical a doctrine as is found in God’s word, because there is one God and one God would not divide Himself by espousing different doctrines, each contrary to one another, and on which are built different religious bodies—each contrary to one another. One God can produce only one system of faith (I Corinthians 1:10) and still be the One God. The fact that unity is the basis for the body known as the church of Christ is not just something God gave as a matter of religious theology; it is the logical result of Who and What He is. And He will not divide Himself. There is one body just as there is one God. See Ephesians 4:1-6.

The possibility of apostasy is not “Church of Christ doctrine.” Nowhere in all the confines of divine revelation is the unconditional security of the believer assured. Almost

every page of the holy word warns against falling from the favor of God. It is almost impossible to escape the constant references to self-examination, testing, and other warnings concerning the possibility of falling from grace (See Galatians 5:4; Hebrews 2:1-3; 10:23-27). Man is a free moral agent. The control of his heart is given freely and voluntarily to God or to the forces of evil, one or the other. Such being so, it must be that man can relinquish the control of that heart back to which ever master he chooses (Joshua 24:14-15). Any other way would disregard human choice. And is not "just Church of Christ doctrine."

Teaching baptism as necessary for the remission of sins is not just "Church of Christ doctrine." Faith is necessary to please God (Hebrews 11:6); repentance is necessary for salvation (Acts 2:38); and the same doctrine of Christ that teaches the necessity of faith and repentance also teaches the need for baptism for the remission of sins (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:38; I Peter 3:21). And "by one spirit where we all baptized into one body" (I Corinthians 12:13). God said baptism is necessary for forgiveness and that's not "just Church of Christ doctrine."

The church must oppose error and promote good. But we must use God and His word as our source for what is error and what is good. Whether or not I like a thing cannot be dismissed with such senseless phrases as "that's just Church of Christ doctrine."