

Narrow-Mindedness

Do not feel insulted when someone tells you that your religion is narrow. Maybe he is right. If he is right, you should feel complimented. Your critic may be confusing narrowness with bigotry, in which case he is the one out of step, not you. Bigotry the Lord condemned; narrowness (in the scriptural use of the term) he commended: "...narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be which find it."

The Narrowness of Truth

Truth is always narrow. Five plus five equals ten; this is true from kindergarten to college and everywhere else in the world. It isn't ten because the arithmetic book says so, but it is ten because it cannot be anything else. If in a class of 100 students, only one gave ten as the answer to five plus five and all the other 99 agreed on a different answer, the one would be right and all the others wrong.

Historical truth is narrow. The Battle of San Jacinto was fought in Texas; Valley Forge was in Pennsylvania. These are facts which are understood alike by all students of history. If a student in a history class gave any other answer concerning the location of these spots, he would be incorrect. No one would think the teacher was "narrow" in telling him so.

There are twelve inches in a foot, three feet in a yard all over the world. It doesn't matter whether the one doing the measuring is a president or a preacher, an illiterate hill-billy or a college professor. To fail to recognize these facts would throw the world into hopeless confusion.

Religious Truth

Since truth in every other field is narrow and dogmatic, why should we suppose that divine truth is so flexible as to be susceptible of any interpretation man wants to place upon it? "We just can't see it alike," someone answers. But we see other things alike. Is man more able to make himself understood than is God? We may misunderstand the meaning of a passage of scripture, but does our misunderstanding of it change the meaning of the passage? Does its meaning change and shift to suit our various understandings of it? If the writer of the passage meant to teach something when he wrote the passage, is not that 'something' that he intended still in the passage?

Take, for example, the much discussed passage, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). The question about this passage is whether Jesus did, or did not, make baptism necessary to salvation. He either did, or he didn't. Some of us believe that he did; others vehemently deny it. It must be apparent to all that somebody is teaching false doctrine on this point. Is it broadminded to ignore these contradictions and pretend they do not exist? Baptists and Presbyterians teach that a child of God cannot fall away from the favor of God and be lost; Methodists teach that he can fall away and be lost. Does the Bible teach both?

Now if we are to escape the stigma of being called "narrow," we must cooperate with and encourage the man who is teaching the very opposite of what we believe to be the truth. Is this honesty? If one preacher preached four conflicting doctrines, people would call him a hypocrite; but if four preachers preach four conflicting doctrines, they are all supposedly teaching the truth!

How Broad Should We Be?

The Unitarian believes that Jesus of Nazareth was a great man and a great teacher, but that he was not the Son of God. The Orthodox Jew worships God, but denies the divinity of Jesus. Shall we have these men in our fellowship? If honesty and sincerity are the only criteria, why not? Who will say they are not as honest as we are? Some denominational preachers are already taking this position. They swap pulpits with Jewish rabbis right along. This shocks the religious sensibilities in the world but it is the legitimate and inevitable fruit of that 'anything-and- anybody-is-right' attitude that we are talking about.

Most members of denominations are not ready yet to take in the Jews and the Unitarians on their broadminded position. They narrow it down a bit. We must believe in Christ, they say; we must see alike on those scriptures that teach that Jesus was the Son of God; that he was born of a virgin; that he suffered vicariously; that he arose from the dead; that he ascended into heaven,

where he intercedes for us. But why must we see alike on those particular passages, but have unbounded liberty to differ on nearly everything else connected with the religion of Christ? Are not the passages pertaining to the organization of the church, baptism, apostasy, worship, church membership, discipline, authority, etc., inspired of God as much as are the other passages? Are not these things a part of the Lord's plan? Have they not place with divine truth? How much truth is essential, and how much is non-essential? How much of the Bible is important, and how much is unimportant?

We feel no personal animosity, of course, toward those who teach things we do not believe; but we cannot, with a good conscience, bid them Godspeed. John said, "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, received him not into your house; neither bid him Godspeed: For he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 10). Paul said, "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:9). These apostles thought it was a matter of much import what a man believed and taught.

We are not infallible, and we are open to any truth that may be presented to us; we will change when convinced we are wrong. But two things we do know, and of them we are certain: (1) truth does not contradict truth, and (2) we will not learn by hiding our heads in the sand and refusing to admit that religious divisions exist, or that such are wrong.

- by Luther Blackmon
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Are Swimsuits OK At The Beach?

In a recent conversation, a Christian 'explained' her view of modest apparel. The specific discussion centered on wearing swimsuits at the beach or public pool. "There's nothing wrong with it," she proclaimed, "because everyone is dressed that way. No one thinks a thing about it."

Her argument fails the test of logic in a couple of fundamental ways. First, if a certain mode of dress is okay because "everyone is dressed that way," then there is literally no limit to what might be allowed. In fact, total nudity would be acceptable - according to this view - just so long as "everyone is dressed that way." We wonder if this sister understands where her faulty thinking could lead. Is she ready to join the crowds at the "clothing optional" beaches that are springing up in many coastal areas?

Secondly, we deny that "no one thinks a thing about it." If this is so, why are the annual 'swimsuit editions' of certain magazines so popular? And, please explain the explosion of pornography in our modern culture. Easy access on the Internet has made addiction to pornography rampant in our day. You say, "no one thinks a thing about it"? Think again!

Most importantly, this flawed argument not only fails the test of logic, but it also fails the test of God's law. Remember, we are not in the business of establishing our moral values based upon what the majority of people do or think (Exodus 23:2). Our standard must be the inspired Word of God (John 12:48). The Scriptures define "nakedness" (Gen. 3:6-11,21; Exo. 28:40-43) and obligate us to maintain modesty (1 Tim. 2:9,10). We pose this simple question to our sister (and to any other Christian who believes as she does): If modern swimsuits adequately cover "nakedness" - as defined in the Bible - and also allow a person to maintain modesty, can you describe any article of clothing that would NOT do so? Think!!!

- by Greg Gwin