

Do You Want an Easy Religion?

Jesus Christ would probably be called "undemocratic" by many today. He asserted that the majority choose the road that ends in hell: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matthew 7:13)

There are two gates, two roads, and two destinations. The human race is divided, now and eternally, between the two. Most people choose the broad gate, walk the broad road, and finally go to hell.

The broad way is the easy way. It is the path of least resistance. We enter the wide gate automatically; no effort is required at any point. It is the way of easy religion in a comfortable, respectable church that does not embarrass a person with a lot of strict principles; does not interfere with the way a person wants to live his own life. If our idea is "Don't fence me in," we will choose the broad road. By doing so, we can have the name of being a Christian without any of the hardships and sacrifices of being a Christian.

The broad way is also the popular way, for "many there be which go in thereat." If we just can't stand being different, we will certainly want to choose the broad way, for it is the preference of the majority of people. Unfortunately, however, it is possible for the majority to be wrong, even on very important matters. And it is possible for the majority to be wrong on the most important matter of life.

The broad way is the self-pleasing way. We can walk the broad way and still have what we want. It will not interfere with my ambitions and desires. I can seem to serve God and yet really serve self. I can have the reputation of loving God and yet really be addicted to selfish pleasures. I can be thought a worshipper of God and yet really be as unmitigated an idolater as ever bowed down to wood or stone. I can be called a Christian and yet really worship the idol called "self."

Obviously the broad way has many advantages. A person can enjoy life in his own way as he travels the broad way. There is nothing narrow-minded or stuffy about it. It is a real twenty-first century religion. But the broad way has, after all, one great disadvantage: it ends in hell. Of

course, most of those travelling the broad way do not realise this unpleasant fact. They are definitely under the impression that the broad way ends in heaven. When their funeral is held, some minister may even confidently say that their noble life has ended in eternal bliss. The people in the broad way will find that it ends in hell when they get there. And it will be too late to do anything about it.

The narrow way is the hard way. Salvation is free - we do not earn it; we receive it as a gift - but this does not mean that living the Christian life is easy. On the contrary, it is extremely hard and involves constant effort and sacrifice. Do you think it is hard to be EPC and not sing hymns, not join the lodge, not do your own pleasure on the Lord's Day, and so forth? Those aren't really hard at all; they are quite easy decisions to make. What is really hard is to be a Christian, a real Christian according to God's Word. To be a Christian you have to walk the narrow way, to enter through the narrow gate. That gate is too narrow to get through if we cling to our sinful habits, our selfish ambitions, our love of popularity. When a person enters the narrow gate, he scrapes past the sides; extra luggage can't be gotten through.

The narrow way is the unpopular way: "few there be that find it." Some churches are popular and enjoy the world's acclaim; but not those that insist on people walking the narrow way. The narrow way includes unpopular principles, high requirements, extensive obligations. Why, when a person walks the narrow way, he can't even call his money his own, let alone his time. It is all claimed to belong to God, and a person is expected to devote a substantial portion outright to God's kingdom. And Sabbath observance - a person can't even enjoy a movie or a cricket match on the Sabbath!

You see, the narrow way involves a recognition of God's authority over my life, and this means self surrender, it means personal sacrifices for conscience sake. Most people are unwilling to make those sacrifices. That is why they prefer the broad way. But to choose Christ means to choose the narrow way, and anyone who thinks it doesn't is only kidding himself. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). We can't fool God.

The narrow way is the self-crucifying way. If a person is really a Christian he is crucified with Christ. When we can really say, "I am crucified with Christ" as Paul did, we won't find it too hard to be EPC. We won't even find it too hard to be a Christian.

The narrow way leads to eternal life. It brings a person the sum total of all good in the end. There will be no tragic disillusionments in heaven such as there will be in hell. Which way are you going to choose? Christ said, "Enter in at the strait gate." He calls upon you to decide in favour of the narrow, hard, unpopular way. Are you willing to surrender yourself to Him?

Rev JG Vos

(Taken from The Blue Banner - with some small editorial changes.)

The Evangelical Presbyterian Â· January 2008