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#### “BIG-TENT” RELIGION

Members of both major political parties talk about “big-tent” policies. By *big-tent* they mean inclusion of those who hold views that are diverse from and/or contradictory to core party principles—if they will vote the party ticket. Men will long debate whether or not such represents good politics, but it undeniably represents considerable compromise.

The *big-tent* approach to religion is evident on every hand. Time was when the major denominations had certain conditions/principles to which one must conform for membership, but *big-tent* religion has rendered such largely obsolete. At one time, those who had been divorced and remarried apart from Jesus’ Scriptural cause (Mat. 5:32; 19:9), would be excluded. Until fairly recently, women were not allowed to oc-

cupy pulpits. As recently as the late 19<sup>th</sup> century one will find fierce opposition to worshiping with instrumental music in mainline denominations (e.g., Presbyterianism). The homosexual element has convinced some denominations not only to let them in, but to appoint them “Ring Masters” in their “tents.” Some churches are accepting practicing sodomites, while others are debating if they should make their “tents” that large.

The community/mega-church phenomenon is a product of the *big-tent* syndrome. These groups usually bear no denominational identity, and they thrive on inclusiveness—which they strongly emphasize. Some of these groups arose from community-wide polls that asked residents what they wanted in a “church.” The pollsters then tailored a “church” to fit the tally. These religious groups commonly feature a *grace-only, non-condemning, guilt-free, feel-goodism* “gospel” rooted in pop-psychology. The *big-tent* approach almost guarantees the need for a literal “big tent” to accommodate the crowds it attracts.

Was Jesus a *big-tent* preacher with a *big-tent* church? You be the judge:

- “Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24a).
- “Except ye repent, ye shall all...perish” (Luke 13:3).
- “Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God!” (John 3:5).
- “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Mat. 7:21).
- “I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Mat. 16:18b).
- “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned” (Mark. 16:16).

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